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ABSTRACT

The Miscellaneous Studies section of this collection of conference presentations contains the following 12 papers: "Revelatory Silences: A Critical Analysis of the Structuring Absences in Sydney Pollack's 'Out of Africa'" (Brenda Cooper and David Descutner); "The Cox Fight with the FCC: Gamesmanship, Hidden Agendas, and Personal Vendettas" (Mickie Edwardson); "Talk Radio: Motivation or Titillation?" (Eugenia Zerbinos); "Adult Radio and the Public Interest" (Mike McCauley and Ken Loomis); "The Struggle over the Meaning of Abortion: A Critical Examination of Two Films" (Sharon C. Semmens); "Exploring Birth-or-Abortion Decisions: Methodology for Researching Women's Private Values" (Maggie Jones Patterson and Kate Maloy); "The Scientific Management of Radio, 1919-1993: The Deskilling of Personalities, Programmers and Women" (Phylis Johnson); "Checkbook Journalism in the Electronic Media: Alive and Flourshing" (Mike Meeske and Fred Fedler); "Industry Response in the AM Stereo Marketplace: Letters to Trade Magazine Editors, 1982 to 1992" (W. A. Kelly Huff); "'Wisconsin Death Trip' as Case Study on the Questionable Uses of 19th Century Photographs in Historical Research" (C. Zoe Smith); "Alone...On the Ice: Narrative Strategies in Women's Figure Skating Competition Coverage" (Bettina Fabos); and "Covering Ethics: Evidence of Its Emergence as a Beat and an Argument for Its Inclusion as News" (Debra L. Mason). (NH)

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PROCEEDINGS OF THE ANNUAL MEETING OF THE ASSOCIATION FOR EDUCATION IN JOURNALISM AND MASS COMMUNICATION (76TH, KANSAS CITY, MISSOURI, AUGUST 11-14, 1993). PART XIII: MISCELLANEOUS STUDIES.

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REVELATORY SILENCES:
A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE STRUCTURING ABSENCES IN SYDNEY POLLACK'S "OUT OF AFRICA"

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Presented to the Commission on the Status of Women of the
Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication
national convention, Kansas City, August 1993

Abstract

REVELATORY SILENCES: A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE STRUCTURING ABSENCES IN SYDNEY POLLACK'S "OUT OF AFRICA"

Isak Dinesen's autobiographies primarily focus on her relationships with the African people and the injustices endured by Africans under colonialism, but Sydney Pollack's film version "silenced" expression of these themes in favor of a romanticized Hollywood epic loosely based on the relationship between Dinesen and Denys Finch Hatton. This critical analysis of the film's structuring absences indicates that the film's ideological project serves the related functions of validating white male superiority over both women and racial minorities through silencing the voices of Dinesen and her black servants and friends.

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Introduction

In Hollywood, more than anywhere else the cinema is not 'innocent.'. . .
The American cinema, the main instrument of the ideological
super-structure, is heavily determined at every level of its existence.
Editors of *Cahiers du Cinéma*

In recent years, few autobiographies have generated the mass media attention of Isak Dinesen's *Out of Africa* (1937). In 1985, Dinesen's book, and her other autobiographical work, *Shadows on the Grass* (1961), provided the basis for Sydney Pollack's film, "Out of Africa," starring Meryl Streep as Dinesen and Robert Redford as Denys Finch Hatton. This romantic drama was one of the biggest Hollywood hits of the 1980s, grossing $27 million in the first three weeks after its release (Nixon, 1986) and winning seven Academy Awards, including best picture. Dinesen's books, many of which were out of print, have been re-issued in response to the new interest in her writing (Nixon, 1986).

"Out of Africa" (1985), Hollywood's version of Isak Dinesen's (née Karen Dinesen) autobiography, received praise from many critics for its sensitive portrayal of a strong woman and her adult relationship with a man (Kipnis, 1989). A few dissenting voices emerged, however, that were critical of the movie's representation of colonialism and women. One male critic (Nixon, 1986) attacked the film's glamorization of colonialism, but ignored the sexual politics submerged in its narrative structure. Laura Kipnis (1989), a feminist scholar, argued that "Out of Africa" was "a series of running jokes at the woman's expense. . . . the woman [Dinesen] is constantly undercut, ridiculed, instructed and put in her place by a white male" (pp. 45, 48). The film's underlying message, according to Kipnis, perpetuates the patriarchal ideals of male superiority and dominance and female dependence and submissiveness. Further, Kennedy (1987) stated the most sympathetic and sensitive feature of Dinesen's *Out of Africa* is her portrayal of the Africans with whom she lived and worked. In fact, two African servants, Farah and Kamante, are the focus of Dinesen's autobiography. In contrast, the movie foregrounds Denys Finch Hatton and his romantic relationship with Dinesen, not the Africans.

A fantasy theme analysis comparing Dinesen's autobiographies with Pollack's film revealed conflicting rhetorical themes and visions between these texts (Cooper, 1991). Three corresponding fantasy themes were identified in the narratives of the autobiographies and the film—unity, dependence and acceptance—but the representation of these fantasy themes were contradictory. For example, Dinesen's descriptions of her relationships with Africans conveyed a deep sense of unity and harmony for both the country and the people as well as a corresponding sense of the Africans' dependence upon Dinesen for their well-being. Indeed, Dinesen consistently represented herself as fighting *against* other European settlers in their efforts to change the country and *for* the Africans and their struggles to maintain their identity and dignity. In Pollack's film, however, Dinesen is depicted in the role of the possessor rather than the protector of Africa; in fact, she was recast in the film as one of the offending settlers who violated the rights of the Africans. In addition, although Dinesen represented her relationship with Denys Finch Hatton in her autobiographies as a partnership based on unity and equality, in the film, Dinesen is depicted as assuming a subordinate, dependent role in their relationship.

The varying critical responses to "Out of Africa" raise some interesting questions. Although both the autobiographies and the film document the same 18 years Isak Dinesen lived on a farm during the time Kenya was still British East Africa, their respective accounts of Dinesen's life and times seem to contradict each other. The tensions evident between Dinesen's own accounts and the differing accounts presented in the film are the principal focus of this study. Specifically, the purpose of this study is to explicate the ideological projects embedded within the film's narratives in order to understand the rhetorical strategies used to represent the woman, Isak Dinesen, to a mass audience.

Structuring Absences as Rhetorical Strategies

As a critical concept, a structuring absence refers to the gaps within a text that function to mask the ideological project underlying the text's narrative representations ("John Ford's," 1972). As a method of analysis, explicating the structuring absences of a text aims to identify the text's ideological projects through a "process of active reading. . . to make them [texts] say what they have to say *within* what they leave unsaid" ("John Ford's," p. 8). Rather than limiting a textual analysis to what the text says or intends to say, a researcher analyzes the text in terms of its "constituent lacks" ("John Ford's," p. 8), recognizing that the relationship between what is said and what is left unsaid in a text is always ideological (Henderson, 1973/1974).

For example, an analysis of the structuring absences within the 1939 film, "Young Mr. Lincoln," found that the movie's ideological project was participation in the Republican offensive against the concessions forced on American Big

Business during the Roosevelt administration ("John Ford's," 1972). Thus, the study articulated how the film's ideological project, participation in the Republican offensive, subverted the "deceptively calm surface of the text" ("John Ford's," p. 44) of "Young Mr. Lincoln."

Similarly, Nixon's (1986) study found that Sydney Pollack's film version of *Out of Africa* omitted any indigenous perspective of colonial Kenya. Indeed, all native Kenyans were "whisked" away (Nixon, p. 221). Pollack's film celebrated the romantic paternalism of the colonial era that ignored the injustices perpetrated on native Kenyans by white European settlers. Importantly, Pollack's "celebration of the 'glory-days' of settlerdom" (Nixon, p. 225) coincided with the current America that flaunted its strength and rights to interfere with foreign governments as well as the Thatcher era of England that stridently proclaimed a return to Victorian values in order to restore Britain to its former greatness. Thus, Pollack's "celebration of the 'glory-days' of settlerdom" (Nixon, p. 225) functioned as an ideological project through the film's participation in the Reaganesque interventionism and Thatcheresque rehabilitations of a former empire.

Through an analysis of the structuring absences within the film text of "Out of Africa," this study sought to explicate the ideological messages underlying not only the idyllic pictures of Kenya represented in the film's text, but also the film's representation of Isak Dinesen. The events represented and omitted in the screenplay were compared to the events described in Dinesen's autobiographies (*OA; SG*) [1] as well as biographical accounts of her life (Migel, 1967; Pelensky, 1991; Thurman, 1982; Trzebinski, 1977). Thus, this study further articulated how the ideological projects of Pollack's film subverted the "deceptively calm surface" ("John Ford's," 1972, p. 44) of the film's text . With this sketch of structuring absences as a frame of reference, we can now see how the structuring absences within the text of "Out of Africa" were rhetorically strategic.

Structuring Absences of "Out of Africa"

> *As in every case in which a film is based on literary material, selection is a major problem. What stays and what goes?*
> Sydney Pollack

In 1987, Newmarket Press published the shooting script of "Out of Africa" in a book form with an introduction by Sydney Pollack (Luedtke & Pollack, 1987). The script included annotations by Pollack, indicating which scenes he had cut or rearranged as well as his explanations for the omissions of some scenes in the final version of the film. As will become evident, Pollack's comments provided insight into the ideological projects underlying the structuring absences of the movie's narrative structure.

In the introduction of this study, Karen Blixen has been identified by her pseudonym, Isak Dinesen. Since her married name of Karen Blixen was used in the film, for the purpose of clarity Dinesen's married name is used during the following discussion of the film's structuring absences. Blixen's nickname, Tanne, also is used in the script. In addition, Africans used two Indian words, Msabu and Memsaab, in the film to address Blixen; both terms were used by the Africans when they spoke to white women. Whenever possible, the dialogue cited was taken directly from the published screenplay of "Out of Africa" (Luedtke & Pollack, 1987); however, a great deal of the dialogue was changed during filming and quotes from these scenes were taken from the videotape of "Out of Africa." Page numbers are listed for those sections cited from the screenplay.

The structuring absences of the film "Out of Africa" cluster into four areas: intimate relationships with men, relationships with Africans, finances, and colonialism. In each area, however, the ideological project is the same: to validate patriarchy as both natural and right. In the first three areas of Blixen's relationships and financial issues, Pollack omitted virtually all scenes that would have allowed her to appear independent. These structuring absences operate within the texts to perpetuate an image of female dependence and submission and male independence and dominance. In the last area, colonialism, the injustices surrounding colonialism are ignored and any references to either Blixen's or Finch Hatton's participation in the colonial project have been obscured in the film's narratives. For example, although Blixen is represented as wanting to change and possess Africa and its people, this portrayal barely hints at the injustices perpetrated upon the indigenous African population. Hence, the structuring absences surrounding colonialism operate to deflect attention from the injustices or bigotries of the white settlers who participated in the colonial effort in Kenya.

Intimate Relationships with Men

The first structuring absence is related to Blixen's intimate relationships with men. Throughout the movie, historical facts are eliminated and distorted that would have made Blixen seem less dependent on men. For example, one of the first scenes in the film shows a desperate Karen asking Bror Blixen-Finecke to marry her after she has been rejected by his twin brother, Hans. However, Karen did not propose marriage to Bror; in fact, Bror pressured her for marriage and proposed several times before she finally accepted his offer (Pelensky, 1991; Thurman, 1982; Trzebinski, 1977). The distortion of historical fact in this scene results in an image of female dependence and male independence.

The film's subsequent structuring absences related to their marriage continue to emphasize Bror's dominance and Karen's dependence. For example, the evening of their wedding Bror and Karen are having dinner in their farm house, and Bror announces that instead of running a dairy they will be growing coffee. A heated argument ensues, ending with Bror reminding Karen that her family "bought you a title, baroness—they didn't buy me" (Luedtke & Pollack, 1987, p. 23). Blixen's family did invest the equivalent of millions of dollars in the farm in Africa, and her family originally negotiated the purchase of a 700-acre dairy farm that Bror sold in order to buy instead the 4,500-acre coffee farm (Thurman, 1982). Although it is unclear whether the decision to grow coffee instead of run a dairy farm was a joint one made by both Karen and Bror, Karen knew Bror had purchased the coffee farm long before she left Denmark and apparently had no objections to the decision (Thurman).

Although Karen Blixen was an accomplished game hunter before she ever met Denys Finch Hatton (Thurman, 1982), that information is excluded in order to construct scenes in which he can save Blixen from danger and later on teach her to shoot the wild African game. In one early scene, Karen, attired in expensive riding clothes, has ridden her horse into the plains. While she is kneeling on the ground scanning the landscape with a pair of binoculars, a lioness approaches her. Although Blixen brought a rifle along, she left it on the horse. Fortunately, Berkeley Cole and Finch Hatton had stopped by the farm to visit her. Finding her gone, Finch Hatton rode out to look for her and arrives just as the lion is approaching:

Denys: I wouldn't run. If you do, she'll think you're something good to eat.
Karen: Do you have a gun?
Denys: She won't like the smell of you.
Karen: Shoot it.
Denys: She's had her breakfast.
Karen: Please, shoot her.
Denys: No, let's give her a moment.
Karen: Oh my God, shoot her!

Finch Hatton predicted the lioness' behavior correctly and the animal turns and ambles off. This scene typifies how the narratives are structured to juxtapose Finch Hatton's independence and Blixen's dependence as well as his unity and her disunity with the African country; the scene suggests her ignorance of the country's natural dangers while simultaneously framing Blixen as a woman who needs a man to protect her. In her ignorance of Africa's wild animals, Blixen surely would have been attacked by the lioness had it not been for Finch Hatton's timely intervention.

Two issues surrounding this scene are particularly problematic. First, as previously stated, before Blixen met Finch Hatton she had become an accomplished game hunter who certainly could have protected herself from a lioness. Second, Blixen described a strikingly similar incident with a lion in *Shadows on the Grass,* but in her account, it is Farah who has forgotten his rifle and Blixen who shots the lion in order to save them both.

Similarly, Blixen led supply expeditions for English troops during World War I and did not meet Finch Hatton until a few months before the war ended, long after her expeditions during the summer of 1914 (Thurman, 1982). This fact is "overlooked" in the movie and another scene is created that gives Finch Hatton the opportunity to come to her rescue again; this time she has gotten her supply safari lost in the African desert. In the film, Cole and Finch Hatton, along with their Somali scouts, encounter Blixen and her servants. Finch Hatton gives Blixen his compass and explains how to use it: "Here, find a spot on the horizon each morning and steer by it. South, southwest, about three days." Apart from its distortion of history, the scene reinforces the dependence of Blixen upon males, and in this case the event concerns the traditional male domains of directions and distances.

Finally, the fact that Finch Hatton died before Blixen settled the issue of the African's land is ignored and a scene is constructed in which Finch Hatton saves her one last time when she is pleading with the new Governor for land for her tenant farmers. In this scene, Blixen has kneeled in front of Sir Joseph to plead her case for the tenant farmers and a commissioner motions for an aide to lead her away. At that moment, Finch Hatton appears, dressed in his soiled hunting clothes, and tells the aide, "Wait. Give her a moment please." Blixen then is allowed to continue with her request to the governor. More disturbing than Finch Hatton's role as her protector in this scene is the implication that if he had not intervened on her behalf, Blixen would have been unable to plead her case for the Africans, and consequently she would have failed to secure the land. In this way, Finch Hatton also becomes the protector of the Africans.

Importantly, facts have been changed in order to give Finch Hatton another opportunity to save Blixen. In this case, Finch Hatton had died before Blixen's fight to secure this land was finished (Thurman, 1982). Further, her efforts to secure the land never included begging Sir Joseph to help her before a group of embarrassed and unsympathetic colonialists: that the film puts her in this subordinate position is hardly surprising, given other scenes described above.

Although Blixen represented her relationship with Finch Hatton in her autobiographies as an equal partnership, her interpretation of their relationship is disregarded entirely in the film in favor of a view that reinforces her dependence and his independence. Overall, Blixen's independent voice has been recast into the voice of Finch Hatton in the movie. Further, this transference to the male character in the movie of the independent qualities Blixen assigned to herself in the autobiographies works as a structuring absence; the effects of this transference are that the woman's right to independence is denied and her subordination to men is confirmed.

Even scenes that did hint at Blixen's possible independence were cut before the actual shooting of the movie began. For example, one sequence of scenes after Bror came to the farm to borrow money from Blixen was omitted. The immediately following scene in the film shows Blixen borrowing money from a Nairobi banker in order to keep operating her farm. In the original screenplay, the exchange between Bror and Karen was followed by several scenes at a Monte Carlo night at the Muthaiga Club. After Karen overhears Lord Delamere comment about how much money Bror has lost gambling, she rushes into the room where the all-male poker game is taking place and demands that Bror repay the money she loaned to him. She then slaps Bror when he ignores her request. Had this scene been included, it would have increased the number of times Karen did not behave submissively with Bror to two; the first time was when she told her husband to move off the farm after she discovered that "someone's left her underclothes" (Luedtke & Pollack, 1987, p. 81) in the back seat of their car.

Other scenes in which Blixen would have been depicted with more independence were shortened during the shooting of the movie or the final editing process. For example, the interaction between Karen and Bror in which he reprimands her for bringing the supplies to his camp rather than hiring a man for the safari was cut to one line because Pollack thought the longer dialogue made

Karen seem "preachy" and her lines "too thought out" (Luedtke & Pollack, 1987, p. 156). Karen's original lines were:

Bror:	*Send* someone, I said! You were lucky to get through. It was foolish, Tanne.
Karen:	Bror, listen, you won't run from anything, you never have, that's how you know you're brave. Do you realize I could have lived all my life and never once been really at risk. It's absurd. . . I've *assumed* I was a coward; how would I know otherwise? It's not right the way we're kept safe. (Luedtke & Pollack, 1987, p. 62).

In the film, Karen says simply: "But I did get through, and it was fun." Note that the last line of the original interaction, "It's not right the way we're kept safe," is an implicit objection to the culturally defined female role of dependence and submission. Limiting her response to, "But I did get through, and it was fun," trivializes Karen's reasons for making the journey at the same time as it silences her objections to female dependence on men.

As the leading male character, Pollack's version of Finch Hatton operates to legitimize a man's need for independence as well as his need for freedom from commitments. Indeed, Pollack said:

> We spent two years trying to find the 'spine' or 'armature' of this piece, trying to distill the idea down to one or two clear sentences that would be a guidepost. We finally settled on *Possession. Freedom versus obligation. If I say I love you, what price am I expected to pay? To what extent am I obligated?* (Luedtke & Pollack, 1987, p. ix).

Many reviewers praised this representation of men. For example, a *Newsweek* review read: "Finch Hatton's charm covered a terror of emotional commitment" (Ansen, 1985, p. 73). Another reviewer commented that Finch Hatton's character would have been at home in an American Western film: "He is the hero of the open frontier. . . . He retreats into a search for a new wilderness and a new freedom" (Blake, 1986, p. 75).

The only scene in the film suggesting that Finch Hatton's demands for complete independence might be a bit obsessive was cut during the film's rehearsal. In the beginning of the scene in which Blixen and Finch Hatton end their relationship, Finch Hatton orders Blixen not to sew buttons on his shirt. His harsh reaction to Blixen's mending is another expression of his need for independence in their relationship and leads into the interaction that culminates with Finch Hatton moving out of Blixen's home. In the movie, this dialogue ends with Blixen giving Finch Hatton an ultimatum, "You'll be living elsewhere then," and Finch Hatton responding, "All right." The original script had the interaction end with Blixen going on to say: "I didn't want your soul, Denys—I was only trying to mend your shirt" (Luedtke & Pollack, 1987, p. 134). Pollack said that Blixen's line was cut because, "Although it is a good line, I think the scene ends more strongly without the editorial comment" (Luedtke & Pollack, p. 159). What is important to recognize, however, is that without the final line from Blixen, the scene has ended with the male in control of both the relationship and the interaction; further, the scene ends without Blixen's final challenge to the reasonableness of Finch Hatton's "elusive" behavior. Consequently, the film's ending to this scene operates to validate Finch Hatton's behavior as natural and appropriate for men; when faced with a choice between independence and commitment, our hero must remain true to himself by affirming the former.

The preceding interaction apparently is based on a biographical account of their break-up which states that Finch Hatton moved his possessions to a home of a friend after a "most shattering row" (Trzebinski, 1977, p. 302) with Blixen. What is conveniently omitted in this scene is that Finch Hatton's attraction to Beryl Markham probably triggered the "row." The character of Felicity represents Beryl Markham in the film, but there is never any hint that the relationship between Finch Hatton and Felicity is anything but innocent. However, Finch Hatton "found Beryl Markham irresistible" (Pelensky, 1991, p. 117) and in fact had a "walk out" (i.e., affair) with Markham (Pelensky, p. 118; Thurman, 1982, p. 233). Moreover, Finch Hatton flirted openly with Markham in front of Blixen, thereby provoking quarrels. Friends of the couple believed that his flirtation and affair with Markham "caused his relationship with the baroness to be brought to a head" (Pelensky, p. 118). In a 1984 interview in *Vanity Fair* (Fox), Markham implied that she had been the reason for the "row" between Blixen and Finch Hatton. Omitting this information about Finch Hatton's infidelity serves two functions: it maintained his image as the elusive but loyal hero and it represented Blixen as the jealous, possessive woman who makes unreasonable demands on a man.

Constructing narratives that foreground Blixen's dependence operates as an ideological project within the film. The narratives create a corresponding image of Finch Hatton's strength and independence that simultaneously eliminates Blixen's independence. Importantly, the patriarchal ideals of female submission and dependence and male dominance and independence underlie the structuring absences within these representations of women and men. Traditional ideals of masculinity and femininity are celebrated. As one critic commented:

> So Denys is the safari leader, teaching a novice how to react when confronted with an aroused beast; he is the strong lover helping Karen learn ecstatic release from self-control; he is dear free Denys, sending an urgent signal that, in crucial matters, he must work his smooth domination, because he's the man after all and must know what's best. . . . As lovers, he calls the shots, and she ducks or gets hit. (Corliss, 1986, p. 14).

Relationships with Africans

The second structuring absence involves Blixen's relationships with the African people. As mentioned previously, in contrast to the autobiographies, Blixen's romantic relationships with men are the dominant theme of the movie. Although Pollack acknowledged that *Out of Africa* included many "beautiful and lengthy chapters describing events of her life with her houseman Farah Aden and with Kamante" (Luedtke & Pollack, 1987, p. x), he chose to emphasize her relationships with men and thus limited her interactions with the Africans to "two or three scenes" (Luedtke & Pollack, p. x). In fact, nearly 20 scenes between Blixen and different African characters were omitted from Kurt Luedtke's original screenplay. These choices in themselves function as structuring absences; by choosing to focus on her romantic relationships, Pollack effectively marginalizes Blixen's relationships with the Africans. Likewise, Blixen's interactions with Farah from the autobiographies are recast in the movie into scenes between Blixen and Finch Hatton. Finally, scenes between Blixen and Kamante and Farah either were shortened during the editing process or dropped entirely from the final version of the film.

Several of the original scenes between Blixen and Kamante also were not included in the final version of the film. Moreover, three of these scenes would have portrayed Blixen's compassion for Kamante. For example, in the first scene Kamante is leaning on his crutch in Blixen's yard and she turns to Farah to express her concern for Kamante. Then the following scene showed Blixen applying alcohol to Kamante's diseased leg (Luedtke & Pollack, 1987, p. 30). In the third scene that did not survive the editing process, Blixen would have taken Kamante to the hospital to have his leg treated (Luedtke & Pollack, p. 50). Blixen did in fact take Kamante to one of the mission hospitals when her home remedies failed to heal his diseased leg. In the annotations to the script, Pollack said that the scenes in which Blixen was to treat Kamante's leg were "shot but eliminated during editing for length" (Luedtke & Pollack, p. 155); he did not give a reason for omitting the hospital scene. The final eliminated scene between Blixen and Kamante was written to show them working together in her kitchen (Luedtke & Pollack, p. 257). Although Blixen described in detail her pleasure in working with Kamante in the kitchen in *Out of Africa,* Pollack said that this scene was omitted during shooting "when we knew we would have too much picture" (Luedtke & Pollack, p. 159).

Similarly, a scene that showed dozens of Africans gathered around Blixen's house as she left for Nairobi on business related to securing their land was shot but deleted during the editing of the film (Luedtke & Pollack, 1987, p. 138). In *Out of Africa,* Blixen wrote about this incident, describing how the Kikuyu silently gathered around her house as an expression of their mutual support: "They came and sat round my house from the early morning till night, not so much in order to talk with me as just to follow all my movements. . . . We felt, I believe, up to the very last, a strange comfort and relief in each other's company" (*OA,* pp. 318-319). Pollack (Luedtke & Pollack) said that the scene had to be cut due to the overall length of the movie. Two issues surrounding these omissions are especially problematic, beginning with the obvious problem that nearly every scene depicting Blixen's friendships with her black servants was eliminated from the film. Moreover, these interactions were not invented by Pollack or Luedtke but were described by Blixen in her autobiography; thus, Blixen's voice has been silenced by the voices of the male screenwriter and director.

Furthermore, incidents between Blixen and Farah in the autobiographies were recast in the film as interactions that happened between Blixen and Finch Hatton. For example, during their trip in search of a camp for Finch Hatton's tourist safaris in the film, he mentions Kanuthia, his servant who has died fighting in World War I:

> Karen: I remember him. There was something. . .
>
> Denys: Masai, he was half Masai. That's what you remember about him. They're like nobody else. We think we'll tame them, but we won't. If you put them in prison, they die.
>
> Karen: Why?
>
> Denys: Because they live now. They don't think about the future. They can't grasp the idea that they'll be let out one day. They think it's permanent, so they die. They're the only ones out here that don't care about us—and that is what will finish them.

Several disturbing issues surround this interaction. First, Finch Hatton's description of the Masai tribe echoes Blixen's poignant description in *Out of Africa* of the "tragic fate of the disappearing Masai tribe" (*OA*, 1937, p. 126):

> From the farm, the tragic fate of the disappearing Masai tribe on the other side of the river could be followed from year to year. They were fighters who had been stopped fighting, a dying lion with his claws clipped, a castrated nation. Their spears had been taken from them, their big dashing shields even. . . . Once, on the farm, I had three young bulls transmuted into peaceful bullocks for my ploughs and waggons [sic], and afterwards shut up in the factory yard. There in the night the Hyenas smelled the blood and came up and killed them. This, I thought, was the fate of the Masai. (*OA*, p. 126).

However, the compassion Blixen expressed for the Masai in her autobiography now is spoken by the voice of Finch Hatton.

Second, in her autobiographies Blixen wrote about learning that the Masai people could not survive being imprisoned, but it was Farah who explained this phenomenon to her, not Finch Hatton. Consequently, not only has the female voice been replaced by the male's, but the white male's voice has silenced the voice of the black male. Further, Kanuthia was a Kikuyu, not a Masai, and he didn't die fighting in the war. In fact, he is one of Finch Hatton's servants who came to Blixen's farm to visit Finch Hatton's grave. Replacing Farah with the character of Finch Hatton serves the ideological project of the film in two ways; first, the black male's voice has been silenced, and second, the friendship between Farah and Blixen has also been negated.

Other scenes between Farah and Blixen were either shortened or dropped entirely from the film. For example, in the scene in which Farah is treating Blixen's wounds after she chased the lion away from the ox during the supply safari, two-thirds of Farah's lines were cut from the scene (Luedtke & Pollack, 1987, p. 61). One entire scene in which Blixen was reading poetry to Farah was shot but deleted during the final editing process (Luedtke & Pollack, pp. 103-104). Pollack said that although this scene was "beautifully played by Meryl and Malick" (Luedtke & Pollack, p. 158), it had to be cut to order to shorten the film's length. Another scene was dropped during the editing that showed Blixen and Farah passing out Christmas presents to the African workers (Luedtke & Pollack, p. 124).

One scene between Blixen and Farah originally was to occur before Bror returned from the safari he began the day after their marriage. Bror had left for this trip the morning after their wedding without telling his new wife that he would be gone until the rains came months later. The eliminated scene showed Blixen standing on her front lawn, staring into the African night, when Farah approaches and wraps a shawl around her shoulders. Farah assures Blixen that, "It can rain someday now, msabu." Karen says appreciably, "Thank you, Farah" (Luedtke & Pollack, 1987, p. 31). Consequently, a scene that would have hinted at the closeness between Farah and Blixen was shot but also "eliminated during editing for length" (Luedtke & Pollack, p. 155).

Finally, the ending scene between Farah and Blixen at the train station was shortened. The original screenplay had Blixen asking Farah to take care of her deerhound (Luedtke & Pollack, 1987, p. 152), a request that symbolized the extent of intimacy in their friendship; Blixen's dogs were among her most treasured possessions (Thurman, 1982). This interaction was cut in favor of keeping the section about the compass Finch Hatton had given to Blixen early in the film. In the movie, Blixen hands the compass to Farah and says: "This is very dear to me: it has helped me to find my way." Blixen's statement acknowledges that Finch Hatton has been her instructor throughout her life in Africa, which means the film ends with one more tribute to white male dominance.

The unity Blixen expressed for Africa and its people in her autobiographies is almost entirely obscured in the film. Pollack's focus on Blixen's attempts to possess and change the land stands in contrast to Finch Hatton's desire to preserve the country's primitive culture. In the movie, the compassion Blixen expressed in her autobiographies for the injustices the Africans endured as a result of colonialism is spoken by the voice of Finch Hatton. However, Finch Hatton's desire to keep the country primitive was not related to any ideas of equality or appreciation toward the African people or culture, but instead was related to his own sense of white supremacy toward Africa's indigenous population (Trzebinski, 1977). Indeed, he frequently referred to Africa as "the-great-keep-it-dark Continent" (Trzebinski, p. 58).

In addition to replacing the female voice with the white male's, entire scenes were cut before shooting began that would have portrayed Blixen's unity for the Africans as well as her disunity with the settlers. In one such scene, Blixen was to be shown with "hands filthy," helping her African servants replace a wagon wheel while a European businessman tries to sell Blixen on the idea of bringing a "proper" road to her farm. The original screenplay had Karen interrupting the man to say:

Karen: There's a road there already.
Young man: It's a track really--this will be a proper road--gravel, a

lane each way. Then, if you'll stand the extra cost, we'll bring it on out to you.
Karen: How much would it be?
Young man: Say . . . two hundred pounds.
Karen: Good Lord.
Young man: That's just *our* cost, actually; we thought you'd want it.
Karen: That's kind of you--I suppose I like the old road, really. Can I get you some tea?
Young man: Mustn't thanks: I've got my Kukes working down the way. Leave them alone--you know how they are.
Karen: (not unkindly) No. I've never really known how they are at all.
Young man: Cheery-bye, then.
(Luedtke & Pollack, 1987, pp. 120-121).

Consequently, a scene was omitted that not only expressed some sense of Blixen's unity with both Africa and the African people, but also depicted the bigotry of the white settlers.

The ideological project underlying these structuring absences within the film's narrative structure is twofold. First, any hint of intimacy between a white woman and a black man is denied. Indeed, Thurman (1982) wrote that the English viewed Blixen's intimacy with Farah suspiciously and "could imagine only a lewd motive for it" (p. 115). Second, the narratives negate Blixen's unity with the country, thus shifting any moral culpability for colonialism from the male to the female (Kipnis, 1989). Throughout the movie, Finch Hatton is represented as fitting with Africa and its people in contrast to Blixen's efforts to change both the people and the country.

Finances

The third structuring absence deals with Blixen's financial problems. Although the film shows Blixen struggling to keep her farm from financial ruin, these scenes are placed in the film *after* Bror leaves the farm; this gives the impression that had he stayed on as manager, the farm would not have failed. Here Pollack has omitted the fact that the farm was in financial chaos as a result of Bror's irresponsible management. In fact, in 1921 the company shareholders only agreed not to sell the farm when a stipulation was included that Karen would take over as managing director and Bror would never set "foot on the farm again" (Thurman, 1982, p. 167; Westenholz, 1982/1987). Further, the following year the shareholders insisted that Blixen make this stipulation legally binding by signing a pledge in which she promised that Bror would have "nothing whatsoever to do with" (Westenholz, p. 23) the Karen Coffee Company.

The farm's capital was so depleted when Blixen took over that her family had to reinvest almost as much money as their original investment in the coffee farm (Westenholz, 1982/1987). Moreover, Westenholz contradicted Thurman's (1982) assessment that Dinesen was not a competent farm manager. He argued that Dinesen was an excellent manager, but the farm's financial situations continued to deteriorate due to the climatic conditions that resulted in failing coffee crops year after year. Significantly, the exclusion of details about Bror's mismanagement serves the ideological project: the patriarchal ideals of male independence and strength and female dependence and weakness are reinforced. Accordingly, this omission reinforces the idea that a woman is not competent in roles outside her proper domain of the home, a frequent theme of media representations of women (Butler & Paisley, 1980).

Colonialism

The final structuring absence, and perhaps the most insidious, involves Pollack's representation of colonialism. The few scenes in the original screenplay that did hint at the negative aspects of colonialism were omitted from the final version of the movie and, furthermore, other lines in the script either were deleted or altered so as to "dilute" the bigotry and racism of colonialism. For example, in the scene in which Blixen arrives at the Muthaiga Club looking for Bror before their wedding ceremony, a section of Bror's dialogue was deleted. In the movie, Bror greets Karen and says: "You'll love it here--the servants are wonderful." In the original screenplay, however, Bror goes on to say: "And we pay them almost nothing" (Luedtke & Pollack, 1987, p. 12).

In this same vein, a racist remark of Lord Delamere's at the Blixen's wedding reception was deleted and replaced with a scene in which Delamere tells a joke. Delamere's original lines were: "There's nothing they need, why should they work? Teach the native things to want, *then* he'll work!" (Luedtke & Pollack, 1987, p. 14). In fact, in her autobiographies, Blixen wrote with contempt about the motto of the European businessmen: "Teach the Native to Want" (*SG*, p. 387). According to Pollack, this scene "was rewritten as we staged it to eliminate the heavy colonial exposition and have Delamere tell a joke instead" (Luedtke & Pollack, p. 155).

In a later scene, Kamante comes to the farm to seek treatment for his leg from Blixen. Here a section of this scene was deleted in which Bror warns his wife not to start attending to the needs of the Africans: "Don't start all this, Tanne, once they've got hold of you they don't let go" (Luedtke & Pollack, 1987, p. 45). No reason was given by Pollack for omitting this remark.

Another scene that was the victim of the editing scissors was an interaction between Denys and Bror during the parade scene in which Denys would have expressed his regret for talking his servant Kanuthia into fighting in World War I. In the original screenplay, after Denys tells Karen that Kanuthia has died, Bror joins in their conversation:

Karen: Where's Kanuthia?
Denys: Dead.
(Karen reacts as Bror joins them)
Bror: Hello, Denys! . . . Who's dead?
Karen: Kanuthia.
Bror: (not unkindly) Oh, yes, I remember now . . . Reliable,
wasn't he? I could use one like that. Come—
Denys: One what?
Bror: Join us for a drink.
Denys: They were all fools. Recruited in a language they
didn't understand, paid with things they didn't need—
to fight for a place that was theirs to begin with.
Bror: What are you talking about?
Denys: Why didn't he know better?
Bror: Who?
Denys: You know what turned the trick? I told him he was
needed. . . and he believed me.
Bror: (gently) Denys . . . you're drunk.
Denys: No. I just . . . knew better. (Luedtke & Pollack, 1987, pp. 75-76).

In the final version of the film, the dialogue goes straight from Denys telling Karen about Kanuthia's death to Bror inviting Denys to have a drink with him and Karen. Aside from the fact that historical facts were ignored (i.e., Kanuthia did not die), another scene depicting the bigotry and racism of colonialism, however subtly, was deleted. Pollack said the following about dropping this interaction: "This entire argument was lifted out during rehearsal just prior to shooting. It seemed to make a villain out of Bror and to make Denys seem pretentious and preachy" (Luedtke &

Pollack, p, 156). Although an underlying theme of Blixen's autobiographies was the racism of the European settlers, any protest to the inequalities of colonialism or patriarchy was apparently "too preachy" for the film.

In another instance, an interaction between Blixen and Finch Hatton during their safari was eliminated. In the lines that were dropped, Finch Hatton was expressing his regret over the changes happening in Africa. In the film, Blixen asks Finch Hatton why he brought her along and he replies, "Because I wanted you to see all this. I wanted to show it to you. I thought you'd understand it." Denys' response continued, however, in the original script: "It was kept safe a million years because we couldn't get here. When it's gone, we'll have no proof that there's another way. What's useful here is that you can still see. . . what the intention was" (Luedtke & Pollack, 1987, p. 93). Although this scene and the preceding interaction between Finch Hatton and Bror further reinforced Finch Hatton's unity with Africa and its people in contrast to Blixen's disunity, if the dialogues had been included in the final version of the movie the narratives also would have reflected both the racist attitudes generally accepted by the colonialists and the consequences of colonial power in the country.

Despite the racial and sexual politics underlying the film's narratives, the public loved "Out of Africa." One reviewer summarized the general reaction of the America public when he wrote: "*Out of Africa* is, at last, the free-spirited, fullhearted gesture that everyone has been waiting for the movies to make all decade long. It reclaims the emotional territory that is rightfully theirs" (Schickel, 1985, p. 82). According to Nixon (1986), it is precisely the eagerness of the public to accept Pollack's view of Africa at face value that is the most problematic aspect surrounding the film. Nixon stated that the movie, as well as reviewers, commentators, travel agents, and biographers, including Thurman (1982) and Pollack, have singlemindedly ignored any indigenous perspective of colonial Kenya; all native Kenyans from been "whisked" (p. 221). As Nixon wrote: "A film that so tidily sharpens a tragedy of lost settler love with a tragedy of lost settler land cannot afford to glimpse, far less face, landless sufferings which would dwarf and trivialize its central action" (p. 225).

One of the few hints in this country that there might be a different perspective was a brief reference in *People* reporting that Nairobi journalists had "tried to stir up trouble" (Wallace, 1986, p. 97) during the filming of "Out of Africa." Not surprising was that the press in Kenya stridently protested "Pollack's glossy revival of the proprietary-settler look" (Nixon, 1986, p. 226). One of the issues over which the Nairobi press "tried to stir up trouble" was the fact that the African extras were paid 12 dollars a day in comparison to the 24 dollars earned daily by the white extras (Wallace). In response to this criticism, the film's producers argued that the pay difference was simply a matter of supply and demand; however, they eventually raised the Africans' salaries to the higher rate. The reporter for *People*, did point out to readers that the *Kenya Times* is a government- owned press.

A review in *Jet* magazine was more sympathetic to the critical reception "Out of Africa" was receiving in Kenya, writing that the movie was "not really a Kenyan movie but rather a movie about the nation's colonial period" ("Entertainment," 1986, p. 55). Indeed, in response to the film the *Kenya Times* stated: "There is not a single Kenyan who comes out strong. They are . . . romanticized 'houseboys,' servants whose existence seems to be owed to the presence of the 'memsahib' and their various masters" (cited in "Entertainment," p. 55). The *Jet* review also pointed out that not only had the African extras made half the salaries of the whites extras, but only a handful of the hundreds of blacks and members of the Kikuyu tribe who made up the cast of extras in the film were present at the gala premiere of "Out of Africa" in Nairobi. After viewing the film, Kenya's president replied: "We are not amused" (cited in Kramer, 1986, p. 27).

Pollack's production of "Out of Africa" functions to negate the injustices of colonialism through constructing narratives that glamorize the white settlers and conveniently obscure any negative aspects of colonialism. Pollack's film celebrates the romantic paternalism of the colonial era that ignored the injustices perpetrated on native Kenyans by white European settlers (Nixon, 1986). The beautiful scenery, the gracious settlers, the contented, devoted Africans, all combine with the film's narratives to obscure the bigotries, racism and supremacist attitudes of the white settlers. As one reviewer observed: "The movie wiggles around trying to make these people morally acceptable to a modern audience" (Kael, 1985, p. 67).

Thus, the film's glamorization of colonialism functions as a structuring absence, as it masks the ideological project of perpetuating and justifying the white male power structure. Pollack's negation of the injustices of colonialism simultaneously reaffirms the white male ordering of society. The white settlers were not villains; rather, they were benevolent caretakers of the uncivilized black people.

Sydney Pollack and Female-Male Relationships

Romantic dramas in which the male characters "exhibit an active strength of purpose which is denied most of Pollack's female characters" (Taylor, 1981, p. 119) have been the prevailing theme of Sydney Pollack's other movies. Regardless of the time period in which the movie takes place or whether it's a comedy ("Tootsie"), an adventure ("Jeremiah Johnson;" "Three Days of the Condor"), an ethical drama ("Absence of Malice;"), a tragedy ("They Shoot Horses, Don't They?"), or a romantic drama ("The Way We Were" and "The Electric Horseman"), Pollack's movies "typically force a bright, strong-willed man and a bright, strong-willed woman into romantic combustion" (Corliss, 1986, p. 11). Even his latest release, "Havana," again starring Robert Redford, also adheres to Pollack's romantic formula, leading one reviewer to conclude: "Sydney Pollack is a living oxymoron, a meticulous romantic" (Schickel, 1990, p. 91). Indeed, Pollack has stated: "The only thing that really interests me is the relationship between men and women, because it's a metaphor for everything else in life. . . . There aren't a lot of good love stories left" (Ansen, 1985, p. 74). Thus, Sydney Pollack adds his touch of "romantic idealism" (Schickel, 1985, p. 82) to the male/female relationships that dominate the plots of his movies.

"Out of Africa" is no exception. Although the narratives of Dinesen's autobiographies exclude any romantic drama, Pollack has taken her autobiographies and turned them into the epitome of the Hollywood romantic epic. In fact, of the reviewers who did not applaud this film, their common and primary complaint was Pollack's lack of adherence to Blixen's book in order to focus on her relationship with Finch Hatton. One reviewer complained: "The script gives her little chance to relate to the plantation, her African servants or the proud Kikuyu tribe Dinesen described with such yearning" (Travers, 1986, p. 18). Similarly, O'Toole (1985) wrote: "Crafted with extraordinary grace, *Out of Africa* chronicled her almost mystical relationship with the African landscape and her growing understanding of the natives who worked for her. . . . The movie version focuses on that relationship [Blixen and Finch Hatton], turning it into a classic Hollywood romance" (p. 48). Although these reviewers criticized Pollack's emphasis on the Blixen/Finch Hatton relationship at the expense of her relationships with the Africans, only a handful mentioned the glamorization of colonialism.

Even fewer critics seemed to notice Dinesen's subordinate role to Finch Hatton. The female leads of Pollack's films, however, necessarily assume a subordinate position to the males in order to meet Pollack's formula of celebrating a male's "active strength of purpose" (Taylor, 1981, p. 119) and "virile aggressiveness" (Taylor, p. 103). In view of Pollack's romantic formula, it is hardly surprising that Blixen has been transformed from a strong, independent woman, a woman with "active strength," into a passive woman who achieves her strength through her ability to survive whatever she faces in life. Pollack's depiction of Blixen's strength through her perseverance in the face of life's trials is captured in the remarks of one reviewer: "She returns to Denmark, not as one who has conquered Africa, but as one who has survived it" (Blake, 1986, p. 75).

Pollack argues that the women in his films portray strong characters: "I wouldn't want to do a picture without a strong woman's role. The women in my films have been stronger emotionally than the men; they have more perseverance, more wisdom" (Taylor, 1981, p. 119). What is important to recognize is that Pollack defines male and female strength differently; male strength is defined through the aggressive ability to take charge of situations, while a woman's strength is defined through her ability to persevere, her "tenacious strength in . . . acceptance of life as it is" (Taylor, p. 119). Even the women characters who don't passively accept life still are portrayed simply as reacting to the problems they face rather than exhibiting an "active strength of purpose" (e.g., Gloria in "They Shoot Horses, Don't They?"; Kate in "The Way We Were").

What is problematic with Pollack's romantic formula of male external strength and female internal strength is that the ideals of patriarchy are embedded in his justificatory arguments as well as the narratives of his films. The opposing representations of female and male strength and independence perpetuate a view of female/male relationships that reflects a woman's traditional position within a patriarchal society. Thus, the ideological project of the film continues to be the validation of the patriarchal ideals of male dominance and independence and female submission and dependence. Further, highlighting Blixen's disunity with Africa and its people was necessary in order to make the narrative structure adhere to Pollack's formula; her disunity operated to portray Finch Hatton with "an active strength of purpose" (Taylor, 1981, p. 119). While Blixen reacts to one disaster after another, Finch Hatton's behavior reflects his determination to preserve Africa and its culture.

Even Blixen's later success as a writer is attributed in the movie to Finch Hatton. During the opening scenes of the film, viewers see Finch Hatton hand Blixen a pen. Later on, we understand that Finch Hatton gave the pen to Blixen after she entertained him with one of her stories. When Blixen declines to accept his gift, Finch Hatton tells her to write down her stories. Thus, the narrative suggests that Finch Hatton points Blixen in the direction of becoming a writer

(Corliss, 1986; Kael, 1985); she didn't have an active sense of purpose until a male gave her one.

The representation of Finch Hatton as morally superior to Blixen functions as a structuring absence that obscures the traditional male dominance in his interactions with Blixen. By depicting Finch Hatton as the "existential hero" (Kipnis, 1989, p. 48) who not only rejects colonialism but also strives to enlighten Blixen's self-directed consciousness by teaching her to "Live Without Owning" (Haskell, 1986, p. 14), viewers are encouraged to interpret Finch Hatton's independent behavior in terms of his concern for the African country and indigenous population. This representation makes Finch Hatton's behavior seem appropriate and, by so doing, masks the traditional positioning of both Blixen and Finch Hatton. It is, however, a portrayal that ignores the facts, as Finch Hatton owned vast amounts of land in Africa, and was committed politically to "white supremacy" (Kennedy, 1987, p. 45).

It is difficult, however, to deny that "Out of Africa" is a pleasant film to watch. The beautiful scenery, the haunting soundtrack, and Meryl Streep's performance all combine to present viewers with a film that is visually appealing. Ironically, it is the ultimate complement to a director that even when one recognizes the message underlying the film's narratives as perpetuating cultural imperialism and patriarchal inequalities, one still can enjoy viewing the film. Perhaps this inner conflict is one of the issues the editors of *Cahiers du Cinema* had in mind when they wrote: "In Hollywood, more than anywhere else the cinema is not 'innocent'" ("John Ford's," 1972, p. 10).

Conclusion

> *For film purposes, it seemed to Kurt and me that. . . invention was much more economical than the facts and dramatically much better.*
> Sydney Pollack

Critics seem to agree that *Out of Africa* and *Shadows on the Grass* are not factual accounts of Isak Dinesen's life in Kenya and that Dinesen's views toward the aristocracy significantly influenced both her fiction and nonfiction (Hannah, 1971; Johannesson, 1961; Kennedy, 1987; Langbaum, 1964; Nixon, 1986; Westenholz, 1982/1987). Considerable disagreement remains, however, regarding Dinesen's motivation in her interactions with the Africans as well as her conception of an aristocracy (Aiken, 1990; Hannah; Johannesson; Juhl & Jorgensen, 1981/1985; Kennedy; Nixon; Langbaum; Schow, 1986; Stambaugh, 1988; Westenholz). As a rhetorical inquiry, this study is less concerned with the factual accuracy of Dinesen's autobiographies than with how the stories constructed by Dinesen created a particular view of both herself and Africa for her readers. Accordingly, it is unimportant whether Blixen's stories of her relationships with the Africans were based on her ideas of an outdated notion of *noblesse oblige* or racist attitudes. What is important for this study is that her stories did tell about the relationship between a white woman and black Africans, primarily men, and it is these stories that never made it to the screen.

Hence, it seems that the primary ideological project underlying the narratives of the movie "Out of Africa" was to validate and reaffirm the white male ordering of society as both natural and right. Accordingly, the ideological project of the film's text serves the related functions of validating white male superiority over both women and racial minority groups. Constructing scenes around Finch Hatton's independence and Dinesen's dependence functions as a structuring absence in that Dinesen is not permitted to be self-sufficient; she must always rely on a man. Thus, the narrative structure of the film reflected an explicit acceptance of both male dominance and independence and female submission and dependence.

Pollack's choice to emphasize Dinesen's relationships with Finch Hatton and Bror and thus turn her autobiographies into a classic Hollywood romance was consistent with his personal goal of producing films about male/female relationships. As cited earlier, Pollack has stated: "The only thing that really interests me is the relationship between men and women (Ansen, 1985, p. 74). Significantly, Pollack's personal goal results in a formula for his movie plots that perpetuates the themes of male dominance and independence and female submissiveness and dependence. By constructing narratives in which women are denied the same "active strength of purpose" (Taylor, p. 119) as the men, women must necessarily assume roles that reinforce their subordinate positions to men.

Moreover, omitting most of the details about Dinesen's relationships with the African people in favor of highlighting her intimate relationships with men served both a personal and a public ideological function. At a personal level, Pollack produced another movie that defined the appropriate male/female relationship as one in which the male exhibits external strength, aggressively taking charge of his life, while the woman exhibits internal strength, reacting and surviving the hardships she faces. At a public level, two related ideological functions are served. First, the patriarchal ideals of male independence and dominance and female dependence and submission are validated. Second, by omitting Dinesen's accounts of her friendships with the African people, the "unnaturalness" of interracial relationships is reinforced.

The second function served by the ideological project of the film is validation of white male superiority over racial minority groups. The narratives of "Out of Africa" omit any indigenous perspective of colonialism in favor of a perspective that glamorizes the colonial era of Kenya and romanticizes the paternalism of the white settlers (Nixon, 1986). Importantly, Pollack's version of colonialism in "Out of Africa" works as a structuring absence to mask the injustices of colonialism and simultaneously to represent the Africans as content with their marginalized, oppressed conditions. Indeed, Pollack's representation of the African servants in "Out of Africa" seems analogous to the black character type in literature that the black poet Sterling Brown, in 1933, identified as the "contented slave" (Gates, 1989, p. 40).

Earlier attempts to make a movie of *Out of Africa* had not been successful. During the 1950s, a version of Dinesen's autobiography was planned and rumors circulated that Greta Garbo would play the role of Karen Blixen. Robert Ardrey tried to develop a script for *Out of Africa* in the 1960s, and Nicholas Roeg planned to film it in the 1970s (Ansen, 1985). The projects always fell short because Dinesen's life stories "resisted dramaturgy" (Ansen, p. 72).

One is compelled to ask why film producers and screenwriters found Dinesen's book so difficult to translate into film. The book is full of emotional tension and dramatic conflict. There was also emotional intimacy between the characters. The problem is that the conflicts dealt with the injustices the Africans experienced as a result of colonialism and bigotry of the white settlers, and the intimacy was between a white woman and black men. The only apparent reason that her autobiography "resisted dramaturgy" (Ansen, 1985, p. 72) was because no one wanted to make a film about a white woman and her love for black Africans: "Studios do not spend $30 million dollars on movies about coffee farms and Kikuyu chiefs" (Ansen, p. 72). Hence, when *Out of Africa* finally made it to the silver screen, Pollack granted Dinesen a "monopoly over pain" (Nixon, 1986, p. 224) and the pain of the black race that was a major theme of Dinesen's autobiography was nonexistent.

Finally, "Out of Africa" is not Isak Dinesen's story; it is Sydney Pollack's story and, to a lesser extent, Kurt Luedtke's story of her life in Africa. Although Luedtke wrote the first draft of the screenplay, Pollack had an active role in the subsequent drafts. Pollack and Luedtke spent most of 1983 writing two more drafts of the screenplay, and during 1984 David Rayfiel assisted them with several more drafts (Luedtke & Pollack, 1987). As Pollack reported:

> Kurt and David sometimes worked alone, sometimes together, and then the three of us would meet and push through the script from the beginning. After shooting finally started, I spent several hours a week on the phone from Africa, working on the final polish with Kurt and David. (Luedtke & Pollack, p. viii).

However, as both producer and director of the movie, Pollack had the final word over what material would be excluded or included in the final version of "Out of Africa." And although the credits of "Out of Africa" list several books from which the film was adapted (i.e., *Out of Africa, Shadows on the Grass;* and the biographies by Thurman, 1982 & Trzebinski, 1977), Pollack could have omitted Dinesen's autobiographies from his sources and no one would have noticed: "The eloquent tales and the fine life that were Isak Dinesen's inventions have now passed through the sanitizing filter of Pollack's sentiment, and it will take a while to get them back" (Kramer, 1986, p. 27).

Toward the end of *Shadows on the Grass,* Dinesen described how her former servants would go to Nairobi in order to dictate letters to a scribe who then would send the letters on to Dinesen's home in Denmark. Before the letters reached her, however, they went through several translations: "The letter, first translated in the mind of the sender from his native Kikuyu tongue into the lingua franca of Swahili, had later passed through the dark Indian mind of the scribe, before it was finally set down, as I read it, in his unorthodox English" (*SG,* p. 444). Dinesen wrote that although she always was pleased to hear from her African friends, the process of dictating their words often resulted in a letter that "had no voice to it" (*SG,* p. 444). Similarly, the result of Pollack's recasting of Dinesen's autobiographies from the poignant stories of her friendships with the African people into a romantic epic is that Isak Dinesen's lifestory "had no voice to it."

Endnote

[1] In order to provide clarification of the specific book being cited within the text of this study, abbreviations have been used for citations of Isak Dinesen's autobiographies. The following abbreviations replace the standard *American Psychological Association* citation of author and year within the manuscript: *OA/Out of Africa* and *SG/Shadows on the Grass.*

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THE COX FIGHT WITH THE FCC: GAMESMANSHIP, HIDDEN AGENDAS, AND PERSONAL VENDETTAS

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Abstract

This is an analysis of procedures used in a 1943-45 investigation of the Federal Communications Commission. The paper demonstrates ways Congressional investigations can depart from their customary fact-finding and oversight purposes to engage in publicity-seeking, over-simplification and emotional language in stating issues, bigotry, exposure of scandal, improper procedures, carelessness about harming innocent individuals, and violations of Constitutional rights. The analysis emphasizes participants' hidden motives and ways government agencies can resist such techniques.

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Abstract

The paper is an analysis of procedures used in a 1943-45 investigation of the Federal Communications Commission that began after the Commission discovered that a Georgia Congressman, Eugene Cox, had accepted a presumably illegal $2500 payment for legal services before the FCC.

This analysis demonstrates ways Congressional committees can depart from the customary fact-finding and oversight purposes of such investigations to engage in publicity-seeking, over-simplification and emotional language in stating issues, bigotry, punishment through exposure of scandal, improper procedures, carelessness about harming innocent individuals, partisan distortions, and violations of Constitutional rights.

The investigation is analyzed in terms of participants' hidden motives. Many were seeking to damage opponents of an opposite party or to obtain personal revenge. Some refused to carry out laws through fear of political retaliation.

The analysis shows how governmental agencies can resist such techniques and also how citizens can analyze Congressional investigations to avoid being misled.

History Division
Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication
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THE COX FIGHT WITH THE FCC: GAMESMANSHIP, HIDDEN AGENDAS, AND PERSONAL VENDETTAS

In its half-century history, the gaudiest attack on the Federal Communications Commission is one that resembles a Gilbert and Sullivan satire on government. Its common name is "the Cox hearings." Georgia Congressman Eugene Cox asked for a House investigation of the FCC and became its chair after the FCC learned that Cox got a $2500 fee for working as a radio station's attorney in dealings with the FCC--information which the Commission sent to the Attorney General as a clear criminal violation (Taylor, 1967). Barnouw (1968) and Salmond (1990) have briefly described efforts by FCC Chairman James Lawrence Fly and FCC Commissioner Clifford Durr to get Cox removed as chair of the hearings.

But very little has been written about the conduct of those hearings which produced 5,000 pages of testimony during 18 months between July, 1943, when the public hearings began and January, 1945, when the final report emerged. The FCC was less than 10 years old when the hearings began, with few precedents and even fewer friends in Congress. Fortunately it had a Chairman who knew how to return blows.

This paper is an analysis of the hearings in terms of the participants' mixed motives and attitudes that kept the investigation from fulfilling what Schlesinger (1983) wrote were the prime purposes of Congressional investigations: to give citizens the information they need to govern themselves and to oversee administration of the law. This investigation went almost comically awry because of publicity seeking, personal feuds, and hidden agendas. It also suffered from plagues that Telford Taylor (FCC General Counsel during part of the period) said afflicted such investigations: partisan distortions and the desire to punish individuals rather than to get information (1955).

The Cox Investigation provides a yardstick by which we can compare later Congressional hearings to see how well they perform their functions.

The Crooked Road to the Investigation

The events leading to the Cox hearings reveal mixed and often hidden motives. Cox was ranking majority member of the Rules Committee and a Southern Congressman who had been fighting Roosevelt's New Deal; Fly was a committed New Dealer. (David, 1991). An indication of Cox's high standing in Congress is the fact that he was considered for the post of House Minority Leader (Rayburn, 1978). According to Ray (1990) the struggle between Cox and the FCC began as Fly's effort to punish Cox for his criticism of the Commission; Fly's assistant, Nathan David, in a privately printed autobiography (1991), says it began as a routine investigation. Both accounts telescope events that began years before the investigation itself.

In November, 1939, the Herald Publishing Company in Albany, Georgia, began trying to get a license for a radio station with help from Cox who often put in a good word for the Georgia newspaper with the FCC, supposedly simply helping a constituent in his district (FCC, Chronology, undated). David said Cox "pestered the Commission endlessly while the application in question was pending and brought great pressure on the Commission staff to grant it" (1991, p. 85). The FCC did not know that Cox was an employee of the station, in defiance of the criminal code's Section 113 which prohibited Congressmen from representing persons before government agencies. In April and June, 1940, Cox made speeches on the House floor commending the FCC and calling for an investigation of the broadcasting industry (FCC, Chronology, undated). This seems odd behavior for a conservative like Cox. Perhaps he was trying to curry favor with the Commission so as to get favorable treatment on the Georgia newspaper's application. Telford Taylor says that political influence did sway the Commission in those days (1967); so the Albany newspaper was perhaps wise to employ Cox. The Commission granted the license for the station (WALB) to operate on limited hours in 1940, soon after Cox's speeches in Congress supporting the FCC (FCC, Chronology, undated).

Three months later WALB began trying to get approval for extended hours of operation. But without a word to the Commission, in January, 1941, the WALB officials changed the station's ownership by incorporating a new firm, the Albany Herald Broadcasting Company. According to Cox, this action was taken because an FCC attorney warned the newspaper that the FCC would be unlikely to let a newspaper-owned station like WALB increase its hours of operation (Cong. Rec. January 19, 1943, p. 234; "Cox Says Proposed," 1943). At the time, the Commission was contemplating hearings about whether to limit newspaper ownership of radio stations. (Fly, Memorandum, December 23, 1940).

In February, 1941, C. D. Tounsley, Secretary-Treasurer of the new company, wrote Cox, asking him to get assignment-of-license forms from the FCC because at this time the corporation did not want the FCC to know a transfer was in the offing. Tounsley also stated that Cox would get his shares of stock soon (FCC, Chronology, undated). Cox later told a reporter he did not know he was to get stock. (Harris, 1943). That spring, a WALB attorney declared that Cox could legally receive money for his services, but not stock, and on April 10, 1941, stockholders of the broadcasting company learned at a meeting that Congressman Cox had been retained "for past and future legal services." (FCC, Chronology, undated, p. 2).

On August 30, 1941, Cox deposited a $2500 check from WALB and used the money to buy stock in the company. The FCC still did not know that Cox was an employee of the station (Harris, 1943).

But during 1941, two broadcasters with extensive holdings, Arthur Lucas and William K. Jenkins, were having hearings on their license for another Georgia station, WGST. They already had so many Georgia stations that the FCC felt their holdings were a worrisome "unusual concentration of control." They had interests in WSAV, Savannah; WMOG, Brunswick, WLAG, LaGrange, and WRDW, Augusta, in addition to an application for a new station in Columbus, and the proposal to operate WGST (FCC, Chronology, undated, p. 6).

In November, Fly sent an investigator to look into the case. Lucas and Jenkins protested the investigation by sending letters to the White House, to Georgia Congressmen, and to House Speaker Sam Rayburn. Fly issued a statement saying that the Commission would decide cases on their merits--not on intimidation (FCC, Chronology, undated).

In January, 1942, Jenkins accidentally let a cat out of a bag by mentioning that he and Lucas had an interest in WALB, the station that employed Cox. The FCC began to get information that made the situation increasingly puzzling. WALB's sworn reports to the Commission failed to mention any such ownership, and so the Commission asked about it. Word came back that both men had no holdings in the Albany Herald Publishing Company (which so far as the FCC knew owned WALB) but they did have stock in the Albany Herald Broadcasting Company (the new company the FCC was not supposed to know about) (Durr, 1943).

Still the FCC did not know that Cox was an employee of the station, so there seemed no reason for the FCC to attack him. Although he was an enemy to Roosevelt's New Deal, he had also been friendly to the Commission, and the FCC needed all the friends in Congress it could get. These were the days when the FCC was proposing network regulations and multiple-ownership rules, questioning newspaper ownership of radio stations, and stopping the Radio Corporation of America's effort to sell substandard television sets--all actions that Broadcasting magazine said aroused the Congress against the Commission ("Cox's Round," 1943); many Congressmen disliked the FCC's activism so much that in 1942 the House proposed changes in the Communications Act to emasculate the agency (House, Proposed changes, 1942).

Just two days after the FCC got confirmation that Lucas and Jenkins had stock in WALB (FCC, Chronology, undated), Cox, on the House floor, made a surprising about-face from his previous favorable attitude toward the FCC and called for an investigation, saying that Fly was the most dangerous man in the government, maintained a "Gestapo", and was putting shackles on freedom of "thought, press, and speech" (Cong. Rec. January 28, 1942, p. 794). We can speculate that his sudden change of attitude and call for an investigation were actually an effort to warn the FCC against giving the Georgia broadcasters more trouble. The following week Cox reported that Fly was ridiculing the proposal for an investigation and contacting Congressmen asking them to vote against it. (Cong. Rec. February 2, 1942, p. 912). The request for an investigation died reportedly because of White House intervention ("Fly Main Target," 1943).

A month later, two FCC investigators went to Georgia to inquire about the holdings of Lucas and Jenkins (FCC, Chronology, undated). On March 9, 1942, the investigators, Russell Rowell and Charles Clift, discovered the check that Congressman Cox had received from WALB as reimbursement for services before the FCC ("Finish Fight," 1943). The Commission now had evidence that Cox had apparently broken the law.

The Commission's investigation may have begun over questions of Jenkins and Lucas' ownership concentration, but the disclosure of the Cox connection brought other motives into play. Rosel Hyde, Assistant FCC General Counsel during the forties, said the discovery of the check gave Fly "an opportunity to do something for the administration." (personal communication, 1989). Marcus Cohn, a young FCC attorney at the time, said the evidence against Cox would help in "getting rid of the conservative bastards in the South." (personal communication, 1989). Cohn described telling Fly that the check to Cox existed:

> And I can remember it quite well that Larry heard my story, my statement of what the check contained and what the affidavit contained and he listened very, very intently and then looked up at me with those great big eyes and in a drooling Texas drawl said, "Give me that check." (Cohn, p. 17.)

A week later, the Commission unanimously authorized its General Counsel, Telford Taylor, to send the information to the Department of Justice for action (Durr, 1943; Taylor, 1967). Cox was not to be silenced. He told reporters he would press for an investigation of the FCC (FCC, Chronology, undated).

Because the Albany Herald Broadcasting Company had failed to tell the Commission about its ownership of WALB, the FCC scheduled a hearing on the station's application for change of frequency and hours as well as license renewal. But the Commission repeatedly postponed the hearing, waiting for the Justice Department to decide how to handle the information about Cox. (FCC, Chronology, undated). The Department justified its delay by saying that any case against Cox would be tried in Georgia, and down among his homefolks, he would certainly be acquitted (Marx, 1967).

Hilda Shea, an FCC attorney at the time, says the Department had another reason. Her husband was high in the Justice

Department, and she recalls talking with Hugh Cox, a lawyer in Attorney General Francis Biddle's office: "He told me that Larry Fly was a silly nut because he sent the check to Biddle expecting him to take action. Biddle said this was very bad. Biddle said he was not going to take action against such a powerful Congressman in the middle of a war. Hugh Cox told me about it and at the time he was laughing about it" (personal communication, 1992). Apparently Biddle feared retaliation against Roosevelt's programs. Telford Taylor recalls talking to Biddle: "Of course, our attitude was: Here it is; it's a plain violation; he ought to be prosecuted. And the Department of Justice had wondered whether if they did it, he'd get acquitted and this would give them a black eye, and how this would affect Biddle's relations with Rayburn and all that sort of thing." (Taylor, 1967, pp. 37-38).

Nathan David (1991) takes a contrary view and says that Fly's willingness to tackle such an adversary was evidence of his honesty and heroism--especially since it might arouse Cox to take even more action against Roosevelt's programs. David quotes Fly as saying: "The only thing I know to do when I come across evidence of a violation of Federal law is to refer it to the Attorney General." (pp. 85-86). Probably Fly had multiple motives.

On January 5, 1943, the Commission in executive session decided to delay the hearings on WALB no longer. The very next day Congressman Cox introduced House Resolution 21 calling for an investigation of the FCC. A week later, the WALB hearings began; a witness revealed the payments to Cox, and newspapers began publishing the story. (FCC, Chronology, undated).

On January 18, 1943, the Rules Committee (of which Cox was ranking majority member) voted out the resolution for an investigation of the FCC unanimously (Cong. Rec., January 19, 1943, p. 233). On the House floor Cox made an often-quoted speech. He said he had not known that the company planned to pay him for his services-- apparently contradicted by the February 21, 1941, letter to him saying that his stock in the corporation would be sent as soon as printed (FCC, Chronology, undated). He said he would be only an advisor to his friends; the corporation had other counsel. But Durr qualified Cox's statement by noting that Cox was the corporation's only Washington counsel (1943). Finally, Cox declared that he had stopped helping the station once he received the stock ("Text of speech," 1943).

Cox's statements became colorful cliches. He accused Fly of setting "his Gestapo like a pack of hungry wolves on my trail;" he said that Fly's agents had been to the newspaper and broadcasting company and "rifled their files." For almost a year the FCC had "sat upon the steps of the Department of Justice" appealing for the Congressman's prosecution. Cox accused Fly of sending his agents to examine Cox's income tax returns. He said Fly was the "worst of a bad lot," that when Fly was General Counsel for the Tennessee Valley Authority, the organization had the best Communist cell of them all. According to Cox, "His whole outfit now is a nest of 'reds'", and "the nastiest nest of rats to be found in this entire country" (Cong. Rec., January 19, 1943, pp. 234-235). Moments after that speech, the House voted to approve the investigation, and Speaker Sam Rayburn immediately made Cox its chairman (Cong. Rec. January 19, 1943). A clearer conflict of interest is hard to imagine--especially since Cox had declared on the House floor that he had "the deepest possible personal interest" in the matter. (Cong. Rec. January 19, 1943, p. 234).

Two questions come to mind. First, why would Congress approve with only two dissenting votes ("Cox's round," 1943) such an obviously biased investigation? Rosel Hyde said that Congress disliked the FCC so much that it actually applauded the investigation (personal communication, 1989). Events that winter made the dislike totally clear. Later in January an old bill to cut the FCC's powers was reintroduced ("FCC ripper bill," 1943). The House Special Committee to Investigate un-American Activities, chaired by Martin Dies, again attacked the FCC for employing Communists ("House may slash," 1943), the Appropriations Committee recommended a cut of $500,000 from the FCC budget ("Half-million cut," 1943), and in February the House threatened to cut off all funds for the FCC, thereby abolishing it. Speaker Rayburn put aside his gavel and reminded the House that in the middle of a war the FCC was the only agency "that has any control whatsoever over the air of the United States. Do you, by your vote at this time want to strike down that only agency?" Even after that speech 87 Congressmen voted to withhold all funds from the FCC ("Garey Chief Counsel", 1943, pp. 9, 45). Fairness to the Commission was apparently the last thing on many Congressmen's minds.

The second question is: Why did Rayburn appoint Cox Chairman? The reasons are probably complex. Newspaper articles at the time mentioned that the men were friends (Robertson, 1943). Still, Rayburn had some doubts about Cox's abilities or emotional stability; when Cox was being considered for the post of House Minority Leader in 1946, Rayburn wrote Congressman John MacCormack saying that giving Cox the post "would destroy him" (Rayburn, 1978, p. 137). D. B. Hardeman, one of Rayburn's aides, in the biography of Rayburn he co-authored with D. C. Bacon (1987), gives reasons for the alliance between Rayburn and Cox: Cox's high position on the Rules Committee and his loyalty to Rayburn, who frequently persuaded Cox to change a vote or a speech. Their friendship seems real. When Congressman Will Rogers, Jr., accused Cox of taking a bribe, and the men almost started to fight, House Speaker Rayburn himself took Cox for a walk "to cool him off." ("FCC, Cox Renew," 1943, p. 26).

Rosel Hyde mentioned that Rayburn may have appointed Cox because of a tradition that the "complaining witness" or "moving Congressman," the person who requests the investigation, should be its chair (personal communication, 1989). But Durr, in a memorandum asking for Cox's ouster as chairman, cited multiple precedents extending back to 1888 in which persons with personal interest in an investigation (like the interest confessed by Cox) were either disqualified or voluntarily withdrew (Durr, 1943). Speaker Rayburn's need to maintain good relations with Cox, a powerful member of the Rules Committee, also probably played a part in this decision.

Protests against Cox's being the chairman arose quickly in the press. A steady waterfall of critical articles in the Washington Post and other newspapers climaxed in an open letter to Rayburn in the Post with a facsimile of the check, which PM republished in full the following day ("Text of Washington 'Post' Editorial," 1943). Commissioner Durr had already placed a hundred photocopies of the check in the FCC lobby, and Rosel Hyde said that FCC staffers were using them as bookmarks. (personal communication, 1989).

Rayburn referred Commissioner Durr's request for Cox's removal to the Judiciary Committee, but its chairman, Hatton Sumners of Texas, said his committee had no jurisdiction to remove Cox. ("Up to the Speaker," 1943). Congress behaved very much as a club in protecting its members, as both the Washington Post and the Dayton News noted ("Congress or Club?," Washington Post, 1943; "Is Congress a Club?," Dayton News, 1943).

Commissioner Durr said that the only Congressman who called or wrote to support his fight against Cox was a newcomer from Texas, Lyndon Baines Johnson (Durr, 1967). Mrs. Clifford Durr said the Durrs and the Johnsons earlier had become good friends (personal communication, 1992).

The preliminary investigation began early in 1943; the open hearings began in midsummer. Late in 1944, the committee went into executive session and issued its final report in January, 1945. (House, Final Report, 1945).

Personal Fights, Twisted Issues and Unfair Procedures

The nation got a glimpse of of the Cox committee's tactics when the open hearings began July 2, 1943.

The 24 charges laid out by the Committee were more designed to elicit headlines than information. They are so laden with emotional words that demonstration of their accuracy is almost impossible. Here is a sample of charges against the FCC that would be incapable of proof or disproof:

> (1) That it has been and is so completely dominated by its Chairman that, for most purposes, it has become and is a one-man Commission;
> (2) That it is entirely motivated by political partiality and favoritism in the performance of its duties;
> (3) That its powers are unlawfully exercised for the purpose of furthering its own political ideologies and philosophies.
> . . . . .
> (5) That the radio industry has been so purposefully terrorized by the Commission that it is enslaved and lives in an unremitting state of fear, as a result of which it acquiesces in every whim and caprice of the Commission;
> . . . . .
> (11) That in pursuing this course it has adopted and followed the communistic technique of cessation and gradualism;
> . . . . .
> (19) That it has set up a group commonly called the Gestapo for the purpose of unlawfully dominating the radio industry and rendering it subservient to its will (House, Study, pp. 8-9).

In the ensuing months the FCC totaled the list of charges made by the Cox committee and found that the number had grown from 24 to 81. (The FCC's list is not really unbiased; somebody at the Commission nit-picked every word of the testimony looking for enough charges to evoke both sympathy and headlines.) (FCC, Charges, undated).

Cox picked a general counsel who also seemed likely to have a personal agenda aside from information gathering. General

Counsel Eugene Garey was a Wall Street lawyer and friend of Jim Farley who was planning to run for the presidency against FDR in 1944. Garey also was a partner of Raoul Desvernine, a member of the Liberty League which had fought FDR's programs. Among Cox's staff was a senior investigator for the Dies Committee and a former union-buster who had worked for Fisher Body. (Pearson, 1943, May 31 and June 10).

The committee's desire for publicity quickly became obvious. By accident or design, somebody sent Fly a copy of instructions telling committee members how to manage news. Included was what became known as the "Vortex Rule": "Decide what you want the newspapers to hit hardest and then shape each hearing so that the main point becomes the vortex of the testimony. Once that vortex is reached, adjourn." (Emphasis in the original). The committee also was to recess at any time "so that you keep the proceedings completely in control so far as creating news is concerned." Members were urged to space hearings so that the opposition could not "make all kind of counter-charges and replies by issuing statements to the newspapers." ("FCC Investigation," 1943, pp. 3-4). Fly forwarded the guidelines to The New York Times with comments about whether this is the kind of investigation Congress intended to authorize. (Fly, 1943, August 19).

Fly later protested to Clarence F. Lea, (who replaced Cox as investigation chairman) that Garey had engaged "a press agent by the name of Leftwich who circulated among the reporters and told them when they wrote their articles that they should be sure to mention Garey's name." (Fly, 1944, February 6, p. 2).

During the next months Fly repeatedly and publicly protested the Committee's refusal to let the FCC answer charges as they were presented. Fly's concern was that newspaper stories contained only the Cox Committee's version of the evidence and were obviously not aimed at presenting multi-sided information that the public could use in fairly judging the FCC (Fly, 1944, February 6). During the first day of hearings Cox twice refused to let FCC General Counsel Charles Denny speak, and eventually Cox told Denny that police would remove him from the room if he did not resume his seat. (House, Study, 1943, pp. 13, 29). Fly had only one way to present the FCC's side of the record: A jetstream of press releases.

Two disagreements with J. Edgar Hoover, director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, illustrate ways a Congressional committee can distort issues through simplification, creating what Variety called "an old-fashioned congressional smear party" ("Cox probe" 1943, p. 32). Fly had arranged with labor leaders to fingerprint 150,000 licensed radio operators and approximately 40,000 telephone operators who handled international traffic in an effort to locate persons who might harm national security and the war effort. (Taylor, 1967). The problem was that Fly did not have legislative authority to request fingerprints from the telephone operators; they and union leaders voluntarily agreed to be fingerprinted to help the war; they did not want their fingerprints permanently in the FBI files.

Fly interpreted the agreement to mean that the FBI could examine the files under three conditions: The FCC would learn the results, the fingerprints would come back to the FCC's permanent files, and any information concerning non-security, criminal offenses would not go to the workers' present employers or to other non-federal agencies. This last provision was designed to keep employers from discriminating against workers. Fly agreed that if the FBI ever requested particular fingerprints, the FCC would supply them. (Fly, 1942, January 12).

But Attorney General Francis Biddle and Hoover would have no part in this arrangement. Once Hoover got the fingerprints, he wanted to keep them--so that if an employee were fired for subversion, the FBI could check his fingerprints immediately and keep him from getting other work. Fly proposed that any company firing an employee for subversion or other criminal act should notify the FCC which would pass on the information to the FBI (Fly, 1942, March 14). This was not good enough for the Justice Department (Biddle, 1942, February 6).

Fly sent many letters to Biddle between January and June, 1942, finally saying: "The Commission feels that it must not break faith with labor in the absence of some interest touching upon the national security; it also feels that the Government can ill afford to force such a breach of faith" (Fly, June 8, 1942, p. 2). Eventually Fly was forced to yield. The Cox committee's General Counsel stated the issue as a bald declaration that Fly had harmed the war effort by delaying release of fingerprints to the FBI for nine months; the charge was made in this simplified form before public hearings began and long before the FCC was given a chance to answer it. (House, Study, 1943, p. 18).

Fly's second disagreement with Hoover was distorted into a charge blaming Fly for Pearl Harbor. Roosevelt had sponsored a bill to loosen restrictions on wiretapping. Fly disapproved and testified to a House committee in executive session. Joseph Rauh, second in command in the FCC's legal department, went with Fly to the hearings and a half-century later described with obvious relish the outcome: "He blew that goddam bill up to the ceiling. There wasn't anything left of the wiretapping bill when he got done with it." (personal communication, 1989). Hoover said Fly's opposition to wiretapping limited access to enemy plans. Fly also permitted Japanese language broadcasts in Hawaii to continue in months just before Pearl Harbor, over Hoover's objection, and Cox's general counsel said this might have permitted sending signals to Japan that led to the Pearl Harbor disaster (House, Study, 1943, p. 18).

Eventually Fly was able to respond by citing Senator Harry Truman's statement that wiretapping had occurred, Hoover's testimony to Congress that he had "definitely" learned a great deal before Pearl Harbor through wiretapping (so Fly had not prevented this) and that the information had been forwarded to the military. Even more important, the House had passed the wiretapping bill in spite of Fly's supposedly devastatingly effective testimony. The bill had died in the Senate. (House, Study, p. 2667).

Fly quoted Senator Alben Barkley as saying, "I have not heard of anybody stupid enough to think that the debacle at Pearl

Harbor was caused by the failure of Congress to pass wire-tapping legislation." Fly added: "Senator Barkley's circle of acquaintances, apparently, did not extend far enough." (House, Study, 1943, pp. 2667-68).

Telford Taylor wrote that one problem in Congressional investigations was that they could hurt innocent individuals (1955). From the start Cox demonstrated a lack of concern about such harm. He put into the record accusations that were both harmful to individuals and untrue. For example, in the middle of World War II, branding someone a "draft-dodger" was so damaging to reputation that the House Committee on Military Affairs adopted a policy of not mentioning names of deferred personnel. Cox felt no such scruples and published the names of 39 FCC employees whom he said Fly had deferred without justification. Then Cox refused to let Fly put full information about them into the record. So Fly published a press release showing that 10 were already in the military and four others were awaiting induction; nine were on duty in Hawaii because of their ability to interpret the Japanese Kana Code, and the other 16 were on duty in monitoring stations. (FCC, Press Release No. 70283, September 1, 1943).

Another practice that befouled the evidence was Cox's habit of holding interviews or hearings in secret and then revealing only those parts that would support the Committee's case, a practice which Taylor (in describing a similar practice of Senator Joseph McCarthy) called a "mongrel proceeding" (1955, p. 246). The Committee collected months of such private testimony before it began the open hearings. Two days after the first open hearing, Fly issued the following press release listing procedures that might violate the Constitution:

> The long continued conduct of star-chamber proceedings where witnesses were required to appear privately before the Committee's lawyers. On certain important occasions these "hearings" were conducted in hotel rooms. The failure to give the Commission notice of any hearing whatsoever, or to permit its representatives to attend any of these hearings or to permit the Commission to purchase a copy of the transcript or even to inspect a copy thereof. The Commission on different occasions formally requested permission to purchase these transcripts and on each occasion this request was denied. (Fly, "Statement," July 4, 1943, pp. 2-3)

Later in the hearings the Committee, according to Fly, again violated the Bill of Rights. After General Counsel Garey resigned (to be replaced by John Sirica--later prominent in Watergate), the FCC's secretary, T. J. Slowie, protested in a letter to Sirica that an investigator had confiscated all the papers in the desk of an FCC translator of Japanese broadcasts, John Kitasako, including personal correspondence. Committee investigators had entered the employee's home and in his absence had taken "personal checks, personal correspondence, newspaper clippings, a number of copies of newspapers, and copies of the Daily Report [of the Foreign Broadcast Intelligence Service]." (1944, August 2). Fly wrote to the Committee Chairman, Congressman Clarence Lea (who had replaced Eugene Cox by this time) and called the acts "unlawful search and seizure." (Fly, Letter to Clarence Lea, undated). In a letter to Kitasako, Sirica expressed no concern and promised only that the Committee would keep the material in a safe place, in accordance with an agreement Kitasako made while a witness at the hearings.

(August 2, 1944). Possibly Sirica would have behaved differently had Kitasako not been of Japanese descent. The hearings reveal an assortment of ethnic prejudices not calculated to provide objective appraisal of issues.

Kitasako testified about a group of articles he had written for a newspaper circulated in a Wyoming relocation camp for Japanese. The camp's authorities accepted the articles for publication because they demonstrated that Japanese-Americans in Washington, D. C., suffered less from prejudice than did blacks. Nonetheless, Sirica called Kitasako an agitator and criticized his portrayal of such an alarming portrait of racial prejudice: "Don't you realize that the tone of these articles tends to create disunity among the colored race and tends to create racial prejudice?" Kitasako replied that the articles were not read by blacks but by Japanese in an internment camp. (House, Study, pp. 4625-6).

Rosel Hyde recalled an anti-Semitic tilt in the Cox Committee. (personal communication, 1989). Its first General Counsel, Eugene Garey, tried to portray the FCC and other government organizations as dominated by Jews. He frequently asked about the name changes of employees at the FCC and the Office of War Information. With such questions Garey learned that A. Manfred had changed his name from Manfred Abraham. After asking about the "true" name of the OWI's Lee Falk, Garey showed that he already knew that Falk's original name was Leon Harrison Gross and that his mother, after her divorce, had married "a man named Epstein."

(Donahue, PM, October 6, 1943).

Garey went even farther by reading into the published record a statement that had been given in private with no member of the Committee present. The witness was Joseph Lang, General Manger of Station WHOM, describing some FCC and OWI employees:

> There are so many people in Washington who think a hundred percent job can't be done unless it is done by a Jew. If there is one thing that disgusts me, it is when they think an American can't be conscientious enough to do a good job. I told Richards months ago, David, Shea, Spingarn--I called it the ghetto down there--and Cranston, I said, I know what you're up against. (House, Study, 1943, p. 463).

The pattern of pointing out Jewish roots continued when Shea, an FCC attorney, testified. Committee counsel Harry Barger inquired about her father's name, (Samuel Droshnicop) and his birthplace (Russia). (House, Study, p. 3052). Hilda Shea is of Russian-Jewish extraction (personal communication, 1992).

Cox used another questionable tactic that would seem calculated to disarm opposition and hinder fact-finding: threatening to uncover a private scandal. Cox, on the floor of the House threatened Fly: "If I were disposed to go into his record, I could bury him with filth" (Cong. Rec., January 19, 1943, p. 235). And in a press conference, he said: "I could smear James Fly and Clifford Durr as they have smeared me" ("Cox Says Proposed," 1943).

Fly had reason to be concerned about such threats. As a married man with two small children, he was engaged in an extramarital affair that was widely known. Hilda Shea remembers that such relationships were common in Washington, and this one was long-standing (personal communication, 1992). Mrs. Clifford Durr recalls feeling uncomfortable because if she invited Fly to dinner, he brought his wife; at lunch, he brought the other woman (personal communication, 1992). Clifford Durr said he discovered that Fly was reluctant to attack Cox for fear of public exposure that might harm his children (1967). Joseph Rauh said the affair was a "beautiful romance," and that the woman was "strikingly beautiful" and a "marvelous lawyer" (personal communication, 1989).

But Fly was afraid that Cox would follow through on his threats. Rosel Hyde said the committee even investigated Fly's liquor bills (personal communication, 1989). Durr recalled that the night before Fly's appearance before the committee, he asked if he could spend the night at the Durr home in Virginia. After Fly arrived, he displayed great tension, spending a large part of the evening pacing in front of the house. But according to Durr, something happened during the night because the next day Fly testified and was "most controlled--just magnificent . . . quiet and calm and hard hitting" (Durr, 1967, pp. 20-21).

Perhaps Fly simply decided to ignore personal consequences in defending the FCC. However, Ervin James (1980), Clifford Durr's assistant, has a different explanation for Fly's courage and composure at the hearings. James says that he persuaded Lyndon Johnson to intercede with Sam Rayburn to stop Cox's revelation of the scandal. Johnson told James that Rayburn's words to Cox had been: "Now, Gene, there ain't going to be no sex in this investigation. You understand me, Gene. There ain't going to be no sex. There's too damn many of us that are vulnerable on that score." (p. 33). James said that he got word to Fly that he could stop worrying about the exposure of his extra-marital romance.

Rayburn's interference seems predictable based on Hardeman and Bacon's statement that Rayburn often gave orders to Cox. (1987). And Rayburn may have wanted to save Fly's reputation out of friendship. Fly's son, James Lawrence Fly, Jr., says that Rayburn had been a guest in Fly's home. (personal communication, 1989).

The hearings were not closed until January, 1945, when a final report declared the FCC basically guilty of nothing more than occasional questionable judgment (House, Final Report, 1945).

An Early Comeuppance

Cox had stepped aside as chair at the end of September, 1943, long before the hearings ended. Too many newspapers had screamed about the hearings' unfairness. His resignation evoked dramatic language in the House of Representatives that to an unbiased observer must seem an avalanche of hypocrisy. According to Radio Daily, Cox's resignation speech about the "poisoned shafts of slander" he had endured was delivered "in a manner worthy of John Barrymore at his best." ("Cox Resigns," 1943). Majority Leader MacCormack called his resignation "the greatest act of personal sacrifice that any man has ever made who has ever been a member of this distinguished body" ("Cox resigns," 1943). Speaker Rayburn declared that "after 20 years of intimate association with Gene Cox, during which he has had my friendship and my love and my confidence, that today that love and that confidence in his honor and his integrity is unshaken". The House gave Cox a standing ovation (Ryan, 1943, p. 1). Supposedly he had agreed to resign if the Justice Department would not prosecute. (Pearson, 1943, October 6). Earlier Cox had defended his acceptance of the payment from WALB by declaring:

> I thought I was doing a heavenly thing, a Godlike thing. . . Five years ago, Mrs. Cox was in the Negro section of our town, riding our cook home, or something like that, and she came across an old ramshackle house without even a chimney. Inside was an unwed mother and four children, one of whom was very sick, with a malformed face, diseased teeth and a belly swollen like a watermelon. My wife took this child to our home for a while, paid medical and dental bills, finally got the poor thing placed in a private school and agreed to pay partially for her upkeep and the cost of the schooling. It cost her $400 for the dental bills alone. Now that little girl is much improved. . . . So you see where that $2500 in stock went. Remember, we're just poor folks (Harris, 1943, p. 4D)

I have found no record that anyone in government or the press tried to determine the accuracy of that statement.

To Watch with Caution

Perhaps the most instructive thing about these hearings is that most of the participants appeared to have motives they were not willing or able to talk about publicly. Cox wanted to punish the FCC and its Chairman for exposing his hidden moonlighting for WALB. He and his General Counsel Garey belonged to the political camp that opposed FDR and were glad to embarrass his agency. Fly and the FCC were happy to weaken one of FDR's powerful opponents. Congress was eager for the obstreperous FCC to get its comeuppance. The Attorney General was afraid to offend a power in Congress who could damage the president's policies. Speaker Rayburn acted out of apparent affection for Cox--but also may have felt some reluctance to offend someone with Cox's power on the Rules Committee and doubtless also wanted to keep his beloved House of Representatives from pursuing hearings that the press declared were tainted and thus disreputable.

In evaluating any Congressional investigation, it is wise to examine participants' motives; in such committees the pure gold of necessary factfinding may be alloyed with baser metals.

The possibility of tangled motives raises several questions to ask in judging Congressional hearing procedures: Is the committee trying to learn specific facts that can be discovered or do the legislators state their purposes in emotional words that promote headlines rather than factfinding? To what extent do the investigations become an effort to punish individuals rather than to find the basis for better government? Are the issues distorted or oversimplified? Are the investigators grinding axes?

Nowadays investigations--relayed on television by C-SPAN and occasionally commercial networks--will be cautious about introducing obvious bigotry at a time when television audiences and minorities are sensitized to loaded language. Nonetheless committees can still introduce bias or hide an agenda.

The most fascinating figure in the story is FCC Chairman James Lawrence Fly who fought back with press releases combining intelligence and wit. As Fred Friendly has said, during Fly's administration the FCC was "more than a tower of Jell-o on the Potomac" (1967, p. 2).

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Talk Radio: Motivation or Titillation?

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Presented to the Radio-Television Journalism Division of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication, Kansas City, Missouri, August 1993.

News/talk radio, the second most popular radio format in the top 75 markets, has experienced an unprecedented growth in popularity in the past decade and especially in the past four years. It has been suggested that talk radio is having an increased influence on politics and public debate. Consumer activist Ralph Nader has called talk radio "the working people's medium."[1] Talk radio hosts claim they are the "only remaining vital link between the masses and the bureaucrats."[2] Talk show hosts cite defeat of the Congressional pay raise proposal in 1989 as an example of democracy in action.[3] Not everyone is convinced that talk show hosts are driven by a desire to provide a forum for the masses.

> The hosts have unique access to large constituencies, yet they often seem motivated as much by ratings as by the public weal; political protest sells. In their inflammatory zeal, moreover, they tend to offer simplistic emotionally satisfying remedies for complex problems.[4]

The perception that talk radio has a great deal of power over the masses seemed to have influenced television to imitate radio during the 1992 presidential campaign by having two-way talk formats with candidates.[5] Does talk radio really serve to inspire and motivate people to social and political action or is it simply another form of titillating entertainment? The present study explores this question.

Background

The point at which talk radio hosts discovered their power to influence public debate can be traced to 1989 when they aligned themselves with Nader and David Keating of the National Taxpayers Union (NTU). Talk radio was credited with rallying citizens and bringing about defeat of a 51% pay increase proposed by Congress that year.

The first volley was fired in what became known as the "tea bag revolution" when Keating appeared on Roy Fox's morning show on WXYT, Detroit, in December 1988.[6] Keating mentioned that the 215th anniversary of the Boston Tea Party was coming up and a listener suggested sending tea bags to Congress. Another listener, a part-time musician, was moved to write and record "Tea Bag Revolution." NTU made the tape available to about 30 radio stations,[7] and urged stations to ask their listeners to send tea bags to Congress with their names, addresses and a statement, "Read my tea bag...NO FIFTY PERCENT RAISE."[8]

Recognizing the role that talk radio might play in the campaign to stop the pay raise, Nader and Keating talked on dozens of shows. From mid-December 1988 to Feb. 8, 1989, when the pay raise would take effect unless both houses voted against it,[9] talk show hosts hammered away at the topic. As a result, more than 45,000 tea bags were sent to Congress via the NTU. With such outrage shown by the American public, Congress relented and voted against its raise. The following year, though, the House included a pay raise for itself in a congressional ethics reform package and this received no attention from talk radio hosts.

After their success in defeating the 1989 pay raise, about 50[10] talk radio hosts met in Boston to discuss their next crusade and to form the National Association of Radio Talk Show Hosts. Jerry Williams of WRKO(AM) in Boston, was elected chair.[11] Planning that next crusade would not be easy, as Mark Williams of XTRA-AM in San Diego noted:

> Collectively and individually, talk-show hosts have the fattest egos you'd ever want to bump heads against. So the likelihood of them agreeing on a national agenda is small.[12]

Fat egos aside, coming up with a national agenda may be an impractical goal, as talk show hosts discovered in 1990 when they tried to rally listeners around campaign reform. Tom Leykis of KFI-AM in Los Angeles observed, "If the person listening doesn't already have a strong, passionate feeling about an issue, the talk show host isn't going to give it to him."[13] Campaign reform was not the type of issue that was likely to create a public furor like the one over the Congressional pay raise.

Talk show activists seemed better suited to taking on local issues. As Jim McLaughlin of WALE of Providence put it, "the pothole you back into as you drive to work is a bigger problem for people" than any national issue.[14] Many examples of successful campaigns led by activist talk radio hosts at local and regional levels support this view. Jerry Williams, for example, "was definitely influential" in getting the Massachusetts seat belt law repealed.[15] He helped gather 40,000 signatures on a petition calling for a referendum.[16] Talk shows on Christian stations triggered a "flood of complaints" to federal budget director Richard Darman. Religious groups were upset about a proposed $15 million Public Health Service Survey that posed explicit questions on sex habits to gauge the spread of AIDS.[17] Seattle talk show host Mike Siegel launched a national anti-Exxon campaign after the oil spill in Alaska. He organized picket lines and personally delivered 2,000 protest letters to the Exxon president in New York City.[18] Other talk show hosts encouraged their listeners to cut up their credit cards and return them to Exxon, but some hosts would not participate in this campaign.[19]

ABC talk radio host Michael Jackson said the activism displayed by talk radio hosts is "a desperate attempt to get ratings. Rather than tackling an issue from many angles, [the activist hosts] would sooner be the little boys with the bugles leading the charge."[20] Not all talk radio hosts believe in the activism of their peers. Mike Rosen of WRKO in Denver thinks radio is entertainment and should not be trying to rally support for causes.[21]

The number of stations with full-time talk formats continues to grow. Although some talk networks such as ABC's Talkradio and NBC's Talknet have been around for more than a decade, new networks like American Radio Networks are finding a niche among more than 250 affiliates by providing 24-hour, live talk via satellite.[22] From 1987 to 1992, the number of "talk" stations went from 238 to 875, not including an estimated 500 stations that use some talk programming.[23] Nearly 500 stations carry Rush Limbaugh's program. Unlike many of his colleagues, Limbaugh admits that his show "is not about what the callers think," but what he thinks.[24]

Review of the Literature

Previous talk radio studies have focused on characteristics of callers, patterns of communication, and the function talk radio serves. A key component in deciding programming is audience demographics. As Bill Lally, programming director for Talknet, observed, the "talk radio listener is not 75 to dead with green hair and a dialysis machine hooked to his kidneys."[25] Nor is talk radio "a phenomenon attracting mainly kooks, the disenfranchised, the unemployed."[26] The talk radio listener is:

> slightly older--in the 30-to-55-year-old range...mid-to upper-income, and issue-oriented. While Joe Sixpack is still very much a presence on talk's airwaves, anecdotal evidence suggests that many calls now come from corporate executives and others, often using cellular phones in their cars.[27]

Talk radio activism is neither a new phenomenon nor confined to the United States. Crothers studied "talk-back" radio shows in New Zealand in the early 1970s. He asked the same types of questions that are being asked today about talk radio such as: "How much power do current affairs talk-back programmes wield? How much of that power is tied up with the host, and how much flows from the weight of audience behind the programme?" Although his study couldn't answer these questions, Crothers concluded that talk radio programs do wield some power. He cited the example of a controversy discussed on one of the talk programs that concerned placement of a memorial to victims of a ferry disaster. About 1,000 letters were sent to the Mayor on the issue because of the radio campaign. Crothers' analysis may have merit today:

> Talk-backs appear to exert obvious power only on fairly specific issues which can be anchored in widely held sentiments. The host himself must play an active part in mobilising the opinion, and his campaign must be supported by a substantial majority of his callers, and followed up by citizen action such as letter writing. Campaigns are more likely to succeed if the target authority has not committed itself to the course of action, has not anticipated the strength of public opposition, and if it is fairly favourably oriented towards talk-back sessions.[28]

Avery, Ellis and Glover spent a week studying talk radio in Salt Lake City in 1975. The researchers concluded that the talk show host's personality type was the single most important variable in motivating listeners to participate in two-way radio. They did not compare those who called in with those who did not. In a related study, these researchers also concluded that talk radio was a medium for interpersonal communication as well as an outlet for personal opinion.[29] Call-in listeners tended to be retired, living on moderate to low incomes and used talk radio to learn about important political and social events. Others in their study said talk radio gave them the chance to express their opinions in public.

The importance of talk radio as a medium for interpersonal communication also emerged in a study by Avery. He found that callers clearly had favorite hosts with whom they developed a strong alliance and whom they considered to be a good friend. Avery suggested that talk radio provided a way for individuals with common interests, experiences and concerns to share them regularly via a communication network, although they might never meet each other. For listeners who had ready access to a wide range of interpersonal contacts, Avery suggested that talk radio performs an "agenda setting" function. Besides interpersonal contact, he identified four other functions served by talk radio--information provider, entertainment, therapeutic, and ombudsman.[30]

Bierig and Dimmick also found that those who called a talk program were motivated by a need for interpersonal contact. Callers were more likely to be single and living alone, and less likely to be members of organizations.[31]

Further research by Avery and Ellis concluded that there are three stages of involvement with talk radio. The first stage is *aroused curiosity*, wherein a listener is introduced to talk radio. The second stage is *passive involvement*, when the listener becomes "hooked" on talk radio.The third stage is *active participation*, when the listener becomes motivated to call the talk show host.[32] Call-in listeners, however, make up only about 5 percent of the audience.[33]

The need to have one's views and values reinforced was an important function of talk radio for the 184 talk radio callers interviewed by Avery.[34] In an earlier study, Avery *et al.* also found that hosts and callers supported each other. Statements that disagreed with or negatively reinforced previous statements constituted less than 1 percent of the interaction.[35]

Armstrong and Rubin found that people who called talk shows tended to find face-to-face communication less rewarding. The researchers suggested that talk radio provides callers with an accessible and nonthreatening alternative to interpersonal communication. Callers were less mobile than noncallers and they tended to listen for more hours a day. The primary reasons for listening were convenience, entertainment, information, and relaxation.[36] Callers in research by Avery *et al.* also tended to listen every day.[37]

Bouhoutsos, Goodchilds and Huddy found that callers to radio psychology programs tended to be female, unmarried, unemployed and less educated than listeners who did not call. This profile includes characteristics often associated with lower scores on measures of psychological health.[38]

Levy categorized the types of support provided by radio psychology talk show hosts. He concluded that the majority of hosts' statements qualified mainly as informational support, followed by emotional and appraisal support. He suggested that psychology talk shows may be a moderately valuable source of social support. At their worst, Levy said, psychology talk shows were relatively benign phenomenons.[39]

Information and surveillance were the primary gratifications sought by listeners to call-in radio programs in Jamaica. Reinforcement of opinions and companionship were less sought. People of lower socioeconomic status, lower education and higher isolation were most likely to listen to call-in radio programs.[40]

Gratifications sought or reasons why people listen to talk radio could have a bearing on its ability to motivate people. What is learned by talk radio listeners could differ depending on whether they are using it to seek out information, to be entertained, or for companionship. For instance, some research has shown that passive or incidental learning took place when people were exposed to information that they were not seeking.[41] Other research has shown that people who turn to news for recreation and diversionary purposes were less likely to acquire information incidentally from a newscast.[42] Similarly, Culbertson and Stempel found that general or nonfocused use of television did not correlate positively with news knowledge, but focused *and* general use of newspapers correlated with news knowledge. In addition, they found that people who rely on newspapers attend to all media more than do others. They concluded that people who are oriented toward newspapers have a "multimedia orientation associated with active information seeking."[43]

Although none of the talk radio studies located deals with talk radio listeners' news knowledge, some inferences can be made. When talk radio is used by listeners as an information source, information is processed and might lead those listeners to act on the information. When talk radio fulfills an entertainment function, listeners would be less likely to process or act on the information. Previous studies have not explored the functions of talk radio in this way, that is, as a motivator in the political process. So this study might add to our understanding by looking at who listens to talk radio, why they listen and what they learn from it.

METHODOLOGY

A telephone survey of 354 randomly selected households in two Maryland counties, adjacent to the District of Columbia,was conducted during two weeks in April 1989. This was two months after the congressional pay raise was defeated and immediately after talk radio hosts in the area had focused attention on a controversial bill approved by the Maryland legislature to protect smokers from discrimination by their employers. After learning the telephone exchanges for these counties, a table of random numbers generated phone numbers.

Respondents were asked if they had voted in the previous presidential and congressional elections and the frequency (*often, sometimes, rarely, never*) with which they discussed topics in the news with family members, friends and coworkers. Voters and people who talk with others about the news might also listen to talk radio because topics selected for discussion on general talk radio shows are usually related to current events and community concerns.

Respondents were asked if they were *very aware, somewhat aware or not aware* of the pay raise proposal, the tea bag campaign and the smokers' rights bill. Open-ended questions asked respondents how they learned about each of these issues. Responses given to these open-ended questions were *newspapers, radio, television, friend, relative, co-worker, employer, or other*. The majority of *other* responses were *news media*, given by respondents who could not recall a specific medium. They were also asked what action they took to express their view about the pay raise. Responses given were *sent a tea bag, wrote letter/postcard to Congress, wrote letter to newspaper editor, called Congress, called talk show, other*, or *took no action*. If respondents said they took more than one action, this response was coded as *more than one action*.

Politically active people might also be more likely to listen to talk radio. To learn if respondents were politically active, they were asked if they were *members of neighborhood or community associations*, if they had *ever tried to get people to sign petitions to get an issue on the ballot*, or if they had *ever been a member of an organization other than a political party that has attempted to lobby about national, state or local issues.*

Questions regarding radio listening, television viewing and newspaper reading habits were also posed to learn respondents' media use. Talk radio listeners were asked if they had ever called in to a talk radio show. Because so much of the previous research on talk radio has focused on the interpersonal function served by talk radio, survey respondents were given a list of reasons that others have given for listening to talk radio shows. They were asked to indicate how important (*extremely important, somewhat important, not very important or not at all important*) each reason was to them personally. These reasons were:

- To help obtain useful information about daily life
- To know what's going on in my community
- To know why others think as they do
- To be entertained
- To hear points of view expressed that are similar to mine
- For companionship

Demographic information collected included whether respondents were homeowners, renters or neither; smokers, who would be more likely to be aware of the smokers' rights legislation; or federal government employees, who would be more likely to be aware of the pay raise issue and, perhaps, the tea bag campaign. Respondents were also asked how long they had lived in the county, level of education, age (*year of birth*), marital status, and income range. Gender of respondents was not asked but was coded.

Results

Slightly more than half the respondents were married (51%), female (56%), and had at least a bachelor's degree (57%). A fourth were smokers; and 16% worked for the federal government. About 61% were homeowners and almost a third (30%) had household incomes of $50,000 or more. They ranged in age from 18 to 85 with an average age of 38.

More than two-thirds (71%) said they had voted in the 1988 presidential election, and slightly less than two-thirds (60%) had voted in the congressional election. The percentage of those voting was slightly greater for talk radio listeners with 73% saying they had voted for president and 64% saying they had voted in the congressional election. Although this self-report of voting behavior might seem high and perhaps inflated when compared to national averages, the proximity of the respondents to Washington, D.C., could also explain the high concentration of voters.

Nearly half the respondents said they usually listened to radio during morning and/or evening drive time, and, not surprisingly, 42% said they usually listened to the radio in their cars. About 18% said they listened to more than one station, and no station had an overwhelming number of listeners. The station with the largest percentage of listeners in the sample (11%) was WTOP-AM, an all-news station. This station broadcasts traffic updates frequently, of great interest to commuters on the Capital Beltway. Only 5% said they listened to WWRC-AM, an all-talk station. More respondents (63%) listened to FM than AM radio, but there are radio call-in shows on FM as well as AM in the area.

About 40% of the respondents said they listen to talk shows on the radio. Men were slightly more likely than women to listen to talk radio shows and to call a talk show. Almost half the male respondents (49%) and only 40% of the female respondents were talk radio listeners. Among talk radio listeners, 23% of the men and 16% of the women said they had called a talk radio show. Younger listeners, age 18-29, were the least likely to listen to talk radio than were all other age groups. Only 38% of the respondents in that age group listened to talk radio, but about half all other age groups said they listened to talk shows.

The most important reasons for listening to talk radio cited by 72% of the respondents were "to know why others think as they do" and "to be entertained," followed closely by "to help obtain useful information about daily life (70%)." This was followed by "to know what's going on in the community," a function for 63% of the respondents. Slightly more than half (52%) said talk radio was important "to hear similar viewpoints." The least important reason among respondents was "for companionship," reported by only 39% of the respondents as somewhat or extremely important. The response percentages in each category are reported in Table 1.

Table 1
REASONS FOR LISTENING TO TALK RADIO

	Extremely Important	Somewhat Important	Not Very Important	Not At All Important
To help obtain useful information about daily life	25%	44%	20%	10%
To know what's going on in my community	29%	35%	23%	13%
To know why others think as they do	28%	45%	18%	10%
To be entertained	32%	40%	19%	9%
To hear points of view expressed that are similar to mine	16%	36%	33%	15%
For companionship	11%	29%	26%	34%

Slightly more than a fourth of the male listeners (27%) said they listened to talk radio for companionship but more than half the female listeners (52%) said that was an important reason for listening. Although there were only a few respondents in the over-60 age group, 86% of them said that companionship was a somewhat or extremely important reason for listening to talk radio. Least likely to use talk radio for companionship were those in the 45-60-year-old group.

All but 10% of the total number of respondents were aware of the Congressional pay raise proposal. Those who were aware of it, said they learned about the proposal from the *news media* (34%), *television* (23%), *newspapers* (22%), *interpersonal sources such as friends, family, co-workers or employer* (7%) and *radio* (6%). Those who said they learned of it from the news media could not pinpoint a specific medium as the source. The responses on the awareness variables were collapsed into *aware* and *not aware* for the analyses. A chi-square comparison of talk radio listeners and nonlisteners shows that more talk radio listeners were aware of the pay raise proposal than could be expected by chance and fewer nonlisteners were aware of it than could be expected by chance. These results are reported in Table 2.

Table 2
AWARENESS OF CONGRESSIONAL PAY RAISE PROPOSAL

	Talk Radio Listeners Observed (Expected)	Talk Radio Nonlisteners Observed (Expected)
Aware of Pay Raise Proposal	136 (127) 96%	153 (162) 85%
Not Aware of Pay Raise Proposal	6 (15) 4%	27 (18) 15%

χ^2 (1, N = 322) = 8.88, p <.01.

Of the sample, 58% were aware of the tea bag revolution and 42% were not. Of those who were aware, more than half (53%) were talk radio listeners. Table 3 reports a chi-square comparison of talk radio listeners and nonlisteners on awareness of the tea bag revolution. The analysis shows that more talk radio listeners were aware of the tea bag revolution than could be expected by chance and fewer nonlisteners were aware of it than could be expected by chance.

Table 3
AWARENESS OF TEA BAG REVOLUTION

	Talk Radio Listeners Observed (Expected)	Talk Radio Nonlisteners Observed (Expected)
Aware of Tea bag Revolution	90 (79) 66%	80 (91) 51%
Not aware of Tea bag Revolution	46 (57) 34%	76 (65) 49%

χ^2 (1, N = 292) = 6.03, p <.01.

Almost all respondents who were federal employees (98%) were aware of the pay raise proposal, but only two-thirds (66%) were aware of the tea bag campaign. About half (51%) of the federal employees in this study said they were talk radio listeners.

Fewer respondents were aware of the bill to protect smokers from being discriminated against by employers and only 43% of the smokers were aware of it.

Those who were aware of it, said they learned about the proposal from the *newspapers* (36%), *news media* (15%), *interpersonal sources* (15%), *television* (14%) and *radio* (12%). A chi-square comparison shows that more talk radio listeners were aware of the smokers rights bill than could be expected by chance and fewer nonlisteners were aware of it than could be expected by chance, but the difference was not significant. These results are reported in Table 4.

Table 4
AWARENESS OF SMOKERS' RIGHTS LEGISLATION

	Talk Radio Listeners Observed (Expected)	Talk Radio Nonlisteners Observed (Expected)
Aware of Legislation	86 (77) 61%	93 (100) 52%
Not aware of Legislation	56 (63) 39%	87 (80) 48%

χ^2 (1, N = 322) = 2.20, p .14.

A greater proportion of talk radio listeners than nonlisteners were likely to talk with family, friends and co-workers about topics that are in the news. Table 5 reports the percentages of listeners and nonlisteners who talk with others about the news. Chi square analyses done on each of these variable produced significant differences on the family ($\chi^2 = 8.27$, $p < .01$) and friends ($\chi^2 = 5.23$, $p < .05$) variables.

Table 5
TALK WITH OTHERS ABOUT TOPICS IN THE NEWS

	Talk Radio Listeners	Talk Radio Nonlisteners
Talk with Family About the News	88%	74%
Talk with Friends About the News	89%	78%
Talk with Coworkers About Topics in the News	82%	76%

There was little difference between talk radio listeners and nonlisteners on the variables designed to measure community activism. The only significant difference was found in the variable related to organization membership ($\chi^2 = 5.43$, $p < .05$). Percentages of the total in each group are presented in Table 8.

Table 8
COMMUNITY ACTIVISM BY RESPONDENTS

	Talk Radio Listeners	Talk Radio Nonlisteners
Member of community or neighborhood association	20%	17%
Tried to get people to sign petitions to get an issue on the ballot	7%	9%
Member of an organization that has attempted to lobby about national, state or local issues	13%	13%

Respondents opposed the pay raise 3 to 1, but few said they took action to express their views about the pay raise proposal. Of those who did, a larger proportion were talk radio listeners than nonlisteners. Only 15 women and 13 men either sent a tea bag, wrote to Congress or called Congress to express their view. None of them called a talk show or wrote a letter to a newspaper editor.

Discussion

The results showed that talk radio listeners were slightly more likely than nonlisteners to have voted; to talk with others about topics in the news; to be aware of the pay raise proposal, the tea bag campaign and the smokers' rights bill; and to be members of a community or neighborhood association. They were also more likely to have taken some action to express their views about the pay raise proposal, but the number of people who took action was too small for analysis.

Although one might conclude from the results that people exhibit this behavior because they have been motivated by talk radio hosts, a more likely explanation is that people who are already highly motivated to learn about community concerns and take political action listen to talk radio. Being issue oriented seems to be a characteristic of the talk radio audience. People who are issue oriented are probably interested in knowing "why others think as they do," the response that ranked first in the list of reasons why people listened to talk radio.

An equally important reason for listening to talk radio for respondents in this study was "to be entertained." Using talk radio to know why others think as they do or simply to be entertained could contribute to a person's ability to talk with others about topics that are in the news. In this study, listeners were significantly more likely than nonlisteners to talk to family and friends about the news. Neither reason is likely to be linked to motivating people to action. Indeed, few respondents in this study were motivated to take action on the pay raise proposal although the majority was opposed to it.

For people to become involved in an issue, they must first recognize that there is a problem, which it personally affects them and, perhaps most important, which they have the power to do something about correcting the problem. Talk radio hosts might make people aware that a problem exists and might even suggest a way to correct the problem, such as by contacting Congress. If people do not recognize that there is a problem, that it affects them personally and that contacting Congress would have an affect, then the talk radio host is probably going to be ineffective in rallying support. Therefore, it seems that the fears of talk radio becoming a powerful and threatening political force are unfounded. The talk radio host may simply help to coordinate people who are ready to act but are uncertain about what action to take. As already pointed out, talk radio hosts, because of the nature of their medium, must oversimplify issues and perhaps offer simple answers for complex problems. If people recognize the solution as too simplistic, such as sending a tea bag to Congress, then they probably will not be moved to action.

Previous research on talk radio suggested that one reason for listening was to obtain information. For example, respondents in a study by Armstrong and Rubin included entertainment and information among the primary reasons for listening to talk radio.[44] "To obtain useful information about daily life" was almost as important a reason in the present study as knowing why others think as they do and to be entertained. Missing from the present study, however, is information on the type of talk radio programs listened to by the respondents. It might be helpful to know if people are listening to talk shows for gardening tips, for help with personal problems, or to learn about community issues and concerns. Conceivably, type of call-in show is related to the reasons for listening. Further research on talk radio should take program type into account.

Other researchers have found that talk radio *callers* had a need to have their views and values reinforced, and that was an important reason for listening for about half (52%) of the respondents in the present study. It is also important to keep in mind that the profile of callers may be different from that of listeners. Only about 5% of talk radio listeners were callers, too few for meaningful analysis.

Previous research has cited interpersonal contact as an important reason for listening to talk radio. Listening to talk radio for companionship can be equated to a need for interpersonal contact. This was the least important reason for listening to talk radio given by respondents in the present study. Of course, some respondents might be reluctant to admit that they listen to the radio for companionship if that is the case. Another way of asking this question might produce more truthful responses. In addition, program type is probably linked to the reason for listening. As one researcher has noted, psychology talk shows may provide a source of social support but for others such programs may merely be entertaining.

While the congressional pay raise was a hot topic in the news, talk radio hosts sometimes found it impossible to change the subject. Few issues, particularly national ones, are likely to attract as much attention. The pay raise issue was black and white -- either Congress allowed itself to get a huge raise or it did not. Few political, social or economic issues are as simple. A case in point is the attempt by talk radio hosts to discuss campaign financing reform. This was a complex issue that does not lend itself to dramatic, attention-getting devices. The complexity of the issue precludes it from sustained audience interest. Given that talk shows are driven by ratings, sustaining audience interest is critical.

Although the tea bag revolution certainly was hastened by talk radio, it was probably fueled as much by the attention given to it by other media as by the talk show hosts. Sending tea bags to Congress was a gimmick that attracted attention from all the media. As a result, the actual source of awareness about the pay raise might have been blurred for respondents in this survey. Even so, slightly more than half the respondents were aware of the tea bag campaign while nearly everyone was aware of the proposed pay raise. Among talk radio listeners, two-thirds were aware of the tea bag campaign.

A limitation of the present study is that it dealt only with two counties in suburban Washington, D.C. The demographics of talk radio listeners in these counties, however, compare favorably with the generally accepted profile of the talk radio audience. An important aspect of this study was looking at talk radio's influence on listeners regarding both a national and a local issue. The national issue garnered sustained attention from other media, whereas the local issue did not. Nevertheless, talk radio seemed to heighten awareness among listeners about the tea bag revolution and about the smokers' rights bill. Slightly more talk radio listeners than nonlisteners were aware of each.

The present descriptive study has attempted to find out the power of talk radio in more than an anecdotal way. It sought to learn whether talk radio has the power to inspire and motivate people to social and political action or whether it is simply another form of titillating entertainment. The answer seems to be, "it depends." When issues are simplistic and clear-cut like the Congressional pay raise, it is relatively easy to get people's attention. When issues are more complex like campaign reform, talk radio hosts are less likely to inspire people to action. Such a topic also would not hold much entertainment value. Clearly talk radio's influence is situational and dependent on the extent to which other media also focus attention on an issue. Talk radio is also more likely to serve an agenda-setting function on local issues than on national ones. The increasing popularity of talk radio demands that more research be undertaken to learn its social and political impact.

Endnotes

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ADULT RADIO AND THE PUBLIC INTEREST

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"All the hits, all the time." "Your information station." "We play less commercials, and more music." "You give us 22 minutes, we'll give you the world." These are just a few of the catchy slogans that American radio stations have used in the last ten years to sell their product to listeners. Whether a station programs music, talk or information, you can be sure that its program director will declare long and loud that his/her station serves its particular audience better than any other can.

There are problems with this line of thinking. For one thing, certain groups of listeners are not always served well by the mix of radio formats in a given market. Hurwitz (1988) notes that contemporary programmers -- and their colleagues in advertising and audience research -- conceptualize listeners as middle class subjects who are bound to interact with the media in a scheme of managed product marketing (pp. 238, 239). Hamel and Schreiner (1989) contend that "90 percent of all radio dollars spent are geared to people under 45," even though audience members in the 50 to 55 year old range have considerably greater spending power (pp. 54, 56). In these examples we may note that some potential audience members -- low income and elderly people in particular -- are not served well by radio.

It's also not uncommon to hear complaints about the lack of creativity and diversity in radio programming; complaints that "every station sounds like every other station." Listeners certainly make these comments and one radio consultant wrote recently that "the audience has seen and heard it all before" (see Dorsie, 1993, p. 1). Bagdikian (1992) says this lack of diverse programming stems from deregulation, highly competitive radio markets and the "hedging of bets" to maximize appeal and profit. Aufderheide (1990) adds that broadcasters no longer have much incentive to air challenging or controversial news and public affairs programs, since the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) suspended its Fairness Doctrine in August of 1987. In spite of the claims of program directors, then, it seems that listener complaints about the blandness of much contemporary radio programming have a strong basis in fact.

Why do radio stations program as they do... and how do audiences use and evaluate the programs they consume? These questions have become increasingly important since the FCC deregulated the radio industry in 1981. With deregulation, *the marketplace alone* determines whether radio stations adequately serve the public interest.[1] Listener perceptions seem strangely absent from the process, and our study is designed to explore this apparent omission.

In the following pages we examine the state of "adult radio" programming in a medium-sized Midwestern city; programming targeted toward listeners 35 and older.[2] In terms of data, we offer transcripts of interviews with radio program directors and focus group sessions conducted with local radio listeners. By comparing and contrasting these two sets of data, we hope to answer the following questions:

- What do radio programmers claim to offer to adult listeners?
- What do adult listeners expect from radio stations and programs?
- How well do adult listeners feel they're being served by radio stations?
- How well do the claims of programmers and audience members match?
- In cases where these claims do not match, what can be done to resolve the disagreement?

THE CONSTRUCTIONIST APPROACH: THEORY AND METHOD

We'll attempt to answer these questions by subjecting transcripts of interviews and focus group sessions to a detailed qualitative content analysis -- a *constructionist* analysis (Gamson, 1989; Gamson and Lasch, 1983; Gamson and Modigliani, 1989).[3] Instead of pondering the meaning of aggregations of words or phrases, we will probe for the presence of *packages* (Gamson and Modigliani, 1989, p. 3). These packages are schemes that people use to construct meanings in messages they send, and to interpret meanings in messages they receive. Packages contain *core frames*, or central organizing ideas that help the speaker to convey "what's at issue." They also contain *condensing symbols* -- linguistic and rhetorical devices that tie discrete bits of content together and situate them within an emerging context (Gamson, 1989, p. 158). There are two types of condensing symbols: *framing devices*[4] and *reasoning devices*.[5]

The structural features of packages can be summarized in a table that Gamson and Modigliani call the signature matrix. In this paper we present two signature matrices -- one to describe the discourse of radio program directors, and one to represent the discourse of audience members. These matrices are supplemented by excerpts from a close analysis of our interview and focus group transcripts.

Analysts using the constructionist approach can identify "package parts" (core frames and condensing symbols) and aggregate them into a coherent whole -- the package itself. In so doing, they explore the richness and complexity of texts in a way that conventional content analysts cannot.[6]

STUDY DESIGN

We conducted in-depth interviews with the persons responsible for programming eight adult-oriented radio stations in the market where the study was conducted. Total population in this market is about 313,000, and more than 96 percent of these people listen to at least one radio program during a typical week.[7] The stations selected for this study may be described briefly as follows:

Station A: Public radio, classical music/information format (FM)
Station B: Public radio, talk/information format (AM)
Station C: Soft adult contemporary/full service (AM)
Station D: Soft adult contemporary (FM)
Station E: Talk/information (AM)
Station F: Easy listening (FM)
Station G: Country/full service (AM)
Station H: Oldies (FM)

In total, these stations garner a 58.3 share of the Average Quarter Hour (AQH) audience (Monday through Sunday, 6 am to midnight) for persons between the ages of 35 and 64 (60.3

share for all persons over 35).[8] Other stations service adults in this market, but none are targeted specifically at adult listeners.

Our second source of data is two focus groups conducted with adults who listen to local radio at least once per day. One group consisted of an "intact" work team of six people (three men and three women) recruited from a federally funded research organization. These people know each other well and interact on a daily basis. The other group consisted of nine people (six men and three women) who, for the most part, didn't know each other prior to the study[9]

Our focus group participants fit into the following age groups:

Age	Number	Percentage of Group
25-35	1	6%
36-45	8	53%
46-55	2	13%
56-65	1	6%
65+	1	6%

We found this distribution satisfying, since a large number of people in the local radio market -- 20.3% -- are between 35 and 44 years of age.

The demographic characteristics of our focus groups coincide, in a general way, with the sort of audience demographics that our radio station managers build their programming around. The age and income figures correspond nicely, while our focus group members tend to be better educated than the "average" local adult radio listener.

By using focus groups to study audience perceptions, we sought to create a "level playing field;" a space where a diverse group of previously unorganized listeners could talk about radio in a collective setting. Radio programmers, by way of comparison, have a discursive advantage; they belong to a pre-existing group of fellow programmers -- a group whose members share a set of common professional practices and perceptions.

PACKAGES, CORE FRAMES AND CONDENSING SYMBOLS IN THE DISCOURSE OF LOCAL ADULT RADIO

All interviews and focus group sessions were tape recorded and transcribed. We identified six packages in the interactive discourse between radio programmers and adult radio listeners.[10] The following is a brief description of these packages:

ENTERTAINMENT: Statements about radio's role as a companion, therapist or source of aesthetic fulfillment.

INFORMATION: Descriptions of radio's role as a provider of timely and important information (ex., news and weather reports).

SOCIAL INTEGRATION: Statements about radio's potential as an agent of cohesion or social integration within American society.

PUBLIC SERVICE: Statements about radio station involvement in various community-oriented projects and promotions.

BUSINESS: Comments about the business aspects of radio, and the ways in which they affect programming decisions.

LISTENER EXPECTATIONS: Specific comments from both listeners and programmers on the ways that radio stations serve adult audiences. Within this package, we find a wide range of perceptions about how well listener needs are met.

ANALYSIS

We analyzed the data by comparing programmer and listener responses across the six packages.[11] The discourse of program directors, distilled from the transcripts of in-depth interviews, is summarized in a signature matrix **(Table 1)**. We use another signature matrix **(Table 2)** to represent the discourse of audience members. Information for this matrix was culled from the transcripts of the two focus group sessions.

In most cases, our package-by-package comparison yielded interesting results. The pages that follow contain a detailed summary of this comparison.

ENTERTAINMENT

The program director of Station H (oldies format) told us that entertainment is one of the prime things adult listeners want from radio. They use the medium to relax, or as accompaniment during the performance of some tedious task. Radio can be used as a mood-enhancer, and radio music can bring back pleasant memories of a time and place associated with a favorite song.

Two programmers made statements about a decline in the creativity of local radio and a consequent drop in its entertainment value. The programmer at Station C (soft AC/full service) laments the loss of many "full service" radio stations in recent years; stations where you could get news, sports, weather, a wide variety of music and entertaining dialogue.

Audience members agreed, in large measure, with programmers' statements about the entertainment value of radio.

INFORMATION

Americans have traditionally turned to radio for the timely delivery of news and other information. One listener recalled a time when radio was the first medium to break a major national story.

> ...I'll never forget hearing about Kent State on WLS (Chicago) when I was in college. And that was something we were intensely concerned about, and that almost spontaneous -- not simultaneous -- but almost instant report. And those who have TV stations couldn't just pack up and run out there and do an on-the-spot report. And so usually, radio was your first source of information on something that just happened.

In general, programmers and listeners think radio continues to perform well as an information medium. However, both groups think that radio stations can do a better job of delivering local news. This point was certainly not lost on the operations manager of Station D (soft AC).

> ...60 to 65 percent of our information ...news ...is local[ly] oriented. ...[Through research,] we found [that there] was a great deal of dissatisfaction with public radio, in that it's "coming off the bird" (satellite) somewhere. Especially in your drive-time hours with "All Things Considered." As well put together as that is, it's ...they don't get into what's going on in [our city] a great deal...

SOCIAL INTEGRATION

Both programmers and audience members say that radio has great potential as an integrating force in society. This sentiment came through strongly in an interview with the director of two public radio stations (Stations A and B). This programmer notes that many of his listeners are highly educated, socially conscious people. When his stations broadcast programs that capture the imagination of these people, he gains a loyal audience.

> [There's] this sense that you are part of a community of people who view the world kind of as you do. And public radio people do tend to think nationally and internationally. And so the fact that it is linked from Boston to San Francisco and everything in-between is important; that the idea of people thinking of themselves as public radio listeners and almost defining themselves that way is important to the quality of life of those particular people, I suppose.

People who listen to talk programs on commercial radio stations may also form communities of listeners. The owner of Station E (talk/information) mentioned a group of people who listen to a popular conservative talk show.

> More and more young people are listening to Rush Limbaugh. First of all, I believe the younger people -- 24 and under-- are more conservative than they were ten or fifteen years ago. Second, they bond with him because he speaks like they do -- outrageously. He tells it like he feels it... like kids today, young people today.

Two listeners agreed that talk radio can help foster a sense of community.

> PERSON 1: You get a feeling for the consensus of the community, you know. Like ..."am I the only one who thinks the mayor was nuts for doing this?"
>
> PERSON 2: There are certain ways in which the call-in programs create a sense of community, because you can hear your State Representative on the radio... and you can hear people asking him questions ...and hear the answer. And I think that's closer [to real dialogue] than reading about it in a newspaper or perhaps seeing in on television.

The people who program talk and information formats say listeners crave the new ideas their programs offer -- and not simply for the purpose of "getting ahead" financially or careerwise. Many of these programs are locally oriented and others -- because of their interactive nature -- "sound local." They make audience members feel involved in ongoing conversations about a variety of topics.

PUBLIC SERVICE

Program directors claim they can "do good things" by sponsoring and publicizing community events.

> We can bring awareness to a particular problem. "...They need clothes, they need food. Here's where you drop them off. (program director of Station C)
>
> Did you see the bumper sticker [that says] "Think globally, act locally?" Well, if you get "x" number of people to act locally, even if it is nothing more than going to the "Walktoberfest" and meeting their neighbors and doing something, helping to raise money for diabetes research... Does that make them better citizens? You're damn right it does! (operations manager of Station D)

Implicit in this approach is the notion that such "public service" campaigns will also boost listenership in some way.

Audience members have a very different perspective about public service. In specific, they talked about a lack of programming on controversial public affairs topics; the kind of programming formerly covered by the FCC's "Fairness Doctrine." This doctrine, suspended in 1987, required broadcasters to address all sides of a public controversy in the course of overall programming and -- in the case of PSAs and purchased air time -- to offer free air time to groups with an opposing opinion who could not pay (Aufderheide, 1990, pp. 47-48).

Some listeners called for a renewal of the Fairness Doctrine or some similar regulation.

> I think that it should be a requirement... a certain amount [of air time] for public service. And they (stations) may think of public service in different ways. ...If [a program host] wants to do it with a public forum on what happened at the [City] Council, OK... that's terrific. Somebody else wants to do it, you know, with national news ...you know what I mean. Otherwise, I'm afraid we're 'gonna lose it.

Another audience member said that since radio stations "have a monopoly on the -- quote, unquote -- public airwaves, ...they owe us something [more public service programming] for that."

BUSINESS

Programmers generally view the business end of radio as a fight for survival, while listeners think radio stations emphasize profit above all else, including program quality.

Programmers -- commercial and public -- are businesspeople, and they treat radio programs as commodities. Consumers choose radio stations just as they choose hairdressers and restaurants. The task of the radio programmer, then, is to "get a piece of the action" -- to compete for a share of listeners' entertainment time.

Many radio programmers -- like the one at Station C -- try to get a huge piece of the action.

> Everybody wants, you know, men and women 25 to 54... and ...that's where the money is. ...It's a business. And you have to make the money back.

This philosophy is common among programmers, and it sometimes leads them to disregard the preferences of adult listeners who fall outside of the above-mentioned age group. In practice, it also excludes the interests of many listeners within the group; in order to maximize listenership, stations often gear their programs toward people who fall in the middle of the 25-54 bracket. The general manager of Station H follows this strategy, and targets the 35-44 audience segment. He knows that older listeners have more money to spend, but says people 35-44 are more attractive to advertisers...

> ...because they're still after the influenceable. They're still after the person who they can change their buying habits. The problem with those of us who are 51 or 52 is that we're getting some set ways. ...On the other hand if you're 35 [to] 44, you're influenced by a lot of things. You're still making your decisions about how you're going to live your life. And you're more influenceable.

This explanation is plausible from a business standpoint; if you influence the core group, you may win over a large portion of the broader target group (25-54). However, this programming dogma also helps explain a critical sentiment held by several focus group participants -- that lots of radio formats sound alike. If several stations in a market gear their programs toward the middle of the same broad demographic group, overall programming in that market can come to sound dull and repetitive.

One audience member lamented the notion that commercial radio programming is driven solely by the potential for profit ...and said this profit motive is directly linked to a lack of diverse programming.

> They're too locked into a kind of minimum common denominator, as though there's a group of listeners out there -- that doesn't include me -- that's basically, I think, the people that spend the most money. Teens and young adults.

Indeed young adults -- garner much attention in the market we studied.

The owner of Station E offered a different opinion about the reasons why so many radio stations pursue the 35-44 target group and, on a larger scale, the "mass audience" of men and women between the ages of 25 and 54.

> A cruel hoax has been foisted upon many people in our industry by the dominant ratings company, Arbitron. They (Arbitron and its predecessors) arbitrarily defined these demographic segments, and arbitrarily defined their buying power.

This station owner thinks the 25-54 group is more of a "family reunion" than a naturally-occurring demographic group. He says the dogmatic pursuit of this broadly defined collection of listeners leads to bland, generic programming since the 25-54 group includes fathers and sons, mothers and daughters, teachers and students -- people who often have little or nothing in common. He says the current system of radio economics -- in which advertisers use ad agencies to buy air time -- perpetuates the problem.

> If you spend some time in advertising agencies ...you will find that the people who actually make the media buys are those who have the least experience and the least qualifications to understand the market. A media buyer is one step up from a secretary in any advertising agency... [and] is like the teller in a bank -- the lowest form of life. ...They have no concept of how to buy radio. They use these numbers; "Arbitron says Station 'x' is number one among women 25-54, so we'll automatically buy that station." They're not sophisticated enough to understand the nuances in every market -- and the nuances in every format -- to buy it [commercial time].

The owner of Station E says radio programmers -- and listeners -- would be better served if ratings firms and ad agencies agreed on other, more sensible target groups for demographic research; groups such as (1) teens, (2) people in their 20s, and (3) everyone else. He says these groupings, broadly defined as they are, represent aggregations of people that are much more closely in tune with the aggregations of values, tastes and incomes that exist in the actual marketplace.

It's possible that radio programmers target their products as they do because they feel "trapped" by the system; that they must play by advertisers rules to stay in business. The owner of Station E is a prime example. Though disenchanted with the system, he continues to pursue listeners in the broadly conceived 25-54 age group.

LISTENER EXPECTATIONS

When asked about listener needs and expectations, many programmers choose, instead, to talk about target marketing. Some of them attract significant audiences through programming that's highly formulaic. They find an important or underserved programming niche and "superserve" it; they narrowcast to a specific audience in a way that "locks them in" to the station.

Other programmers try to demonstrate their grasp of listener expectations by invoking audience research as a professional convention. They wrap themselves in the cloak of "research," perhaps to lay claim to a sense of professionalism that's not available to the layman.

> Well, we did music research. We spent about 25 grand on music research. We did auditorium testing. We do it twice a year. ...I've been operations manager for less than 90 days, so I've had to ingest and figure out more information in those 90 days than most people should have to. There are seven notebooks under there [under a table] of the research project [we just completed], just to get an idea of what the potential audience thinks.

These comments are instructive. They come from the operations manager at Station D, a man who says he programs to an audience of college educated, white collar women -- people who might otherwise listen to public radio stations. However, recent ratings data suggest that this station actually reaches an audience of relatively uneducated blue and white collar men and women.

The programmer at Station C also described a target marketing strategy that's fraught with contradictions.

> Our audience profile is primarily median-range adult, say, between 35 and 54 years old. This is our target... They are primarily more medium income to upscale household income. Which means ...professional people, I guess.
>
> ***We also, obviously, program to the masses*** (emphasis added). But I think in the presentation and some of the elements around the station ...we talk to a more informed ... somebody that would take the time to read the newspaper, that might watch CNN news... So it turns out to be more of a professional, upscale type of person.

Once again, a peek at the ratings books points to an interesting discrepancy. Station C does reach listeners with medium-to-upscale incomes but, once again, is most popular with relatively uneducated blue and white collar listeners.

When we compared interview transcripts with ratings data, we found that these two programmers failed to tell us the whole truth about the type of listeners they serve; both men failed to acknowledge that they served the needs of older listeners, and those with blue collar jobs. Instead, they claimed to serve important "upscale" segments of the overall 25-54 group, segments that advertisers would certainly find attractive. In these cases "research" was cited as justification for programming that seems, in hindsight, to have been poorly focused.

Programmers also have tacit theories about listener response to controversial public affairs programming. Though some stations do carry argumentative talk and information programs, most shy away from the presentation of opinion in matters of controversy. The programmer at Station G (country/full service) explains this tendency by saying that his radio station must serve a "mass audience."

> My perception as a programmer is that it's a mass appeal business. I try to please as many people as I can. Any time there's an element on the radio station that is going out over the airwaves, I try to make sure that it's mass appeal.

In contrast, many of the listeners in our focus groups think mass appeal programming is bland, and that too many stations are offering it. They long for a diverse collection of programs -- both within stations and across stations. Consider, for example, these comments about the repetitiveness of classical music programs on the local FM public radio station.

> PERSON 1: I wish they had more variety of things during the day. They used to have different kinds of ethnic music shows, but now it's all classical.
>
> PERSON 2: It's real safe classical. They're not playing anything that's modern -- something that you may not normally hear. Obviously somebody is making an effort to keep everything sort of "middle of the road" on a lot of these stations. You don't get anything new.

One listener thinks the similarity between local radio formats and those in other cities smacks of conspiracy.

> You know, it almost seems like five years ago or seven years ago someone did a marketing [study], and did a "master format" for the entire United States. You know ... "so much of this, and then you pick this"... And there's someone sitting in L.A. ...that says "these songs are 'gonna make it." And everyone pulls in. It just wouldn't surprise me.

A man in the same group offered a more focused explanation for the trend toward bland, "canned" radio formats. He says the profit motive -- and the advent of computerized formatting -- are important contributing factors.

> The chance of hearing something unique and novel is pretty slim. ...They figure out ...what sells. And they play the tunes that sell, are selling the best. And the new artists, or a little offbeat music, you don't hear.

Some programmers responded to questions about program diversity by referring, once again, to their audience research.

> The musical tastes of mine don't necessarily agree with a lot of the music we play. But it's researched, and we know what our listeners will tolerate ...what they're looking for. And that's what we give them.
>
> The decision has to be made based on facts. ... we sample more people than a presidential poll, than a rating service. What we do is we talk to 15 or 16 hundred adults that have listened to AM ... I mean, it's accurate. They don't lie. ***Facts just don't lie.*** (program director, Station C; emphasis added)

Another programmer (Station D) claimed that intuition plays an important part in his decisions; later on though, he told a story that suggests rigid adherence to the dictates of ratings and audience research. This man says he tries to improve the quality of listeners' lives by "giving them what they need."

> Unfortunately, I need to decide what they need. Or, at least, they decide whether or not what I decide what they need is ...what they need or not.

This confusing -- but not inarticulate -- response demonstrates the lengths to which some programmers will go to mask their reliance on ratings.

We may summarize our description of the listener expectations package with two key observations: (1) The comment made by one listener that radio stations seem to base their programming decisions on a singular "national research project" is not entirely far-fetched. Most programmers process a large amount of data -- generated by Arbitron and other research firms -- and then treat it as fact. (2) Reliance on narrowly conceived research leads to programming that's "safe" and repetitive, and excludes the needs of significant audience sub-groups. Indeed, listeners tell us that radio stations could do a better job of satisfying their creative and intellectual needs by taking an occasional risk -- a risk based on sound research about the unique characteristics of the local market.

CONCLUSIONS

1. Radio has great potential. At its best, it can force listeners to use their imagination. It can entertain them, give them vital information and integrate them, in some measure, into the larger society.

2. Adult radio -- in the market we studied -- does not live up to its potential. A variety of radio formats are available, but many listeners say these formats seem "distant" or "canned". They want stations to develop a stronger focus on local programming.

3. The current system of radio ratings -- and the advertising system that depends on it -- may have serious flaws. Indeed, the popular 25-54 age group resembles a "family reunion;" it contains several sub-groups of listeners that have little or nothing in common. Until this system is modified to reflect the true diversity of the overall radio audience, ratings-based programming decisions will continue to be flawed; they will produce formats -- both within and across markets -- that sound all too familiar.

THE PROGRAMMERS RESPOND

After completing an early draft of this paper, we asked three of the radio programmers interviewed earlier (Stations A & B, E and H) to critique the study. They generally agreed with two of our contentions. First, they agreed that many stations program toward an overly broad target audience. According to Station H's programmer, "too few people have the patience to stick with a niche and super-serve it." The owner of Station E added that many programmers don't know who their audience is, and "pretend it's who their sales department wants it to be."

Secondly, two of the programmers agreed that the the current ratings system, driven by advertiser-influenced demographics, has serious shortcomings.

In the course of their critique, the programmers raised three main points of contention with our study:

(1) It's not fair to suggest that programmers shape their formats with little or no concern for listener needs and expectations. The manager of Stations A and B says any lack of diversity or creativity in programming is related to economic factors that are beyond the control of most stations.

(2) Listeners may ask for more variety in programming, but they don't always listen to the kinds of programs they ask for. To illustrate this point, the programmers used case histories of two "eclectic" radio stations in the market we studied. Both stations were famous for their diverse programming, but one failed and another has a long history of financial problems.

The owner of Station E believes that true inter-station diversity already exists in the market, and thinks that listeners just aren't aware of all the choices available to them.

(3) Many radio stations make public service commitments that transcend simple "do-gooder" projects. One programmer regrets that listeners are generally not aware of the major charity fund-raising events he takes part in.[12]

DISCUSSION

From the viewpoint of radio professionals, the criticisms listed above are understandable. However, most of the listeners who took part in our study feel that local radio stations generally fail to live up to their potential. Adult listeners want formats that go some distance beyond the repetition of a handful of familiar songs. They like provocative programs, along with local news and information. They don't want stations that are "everything to everybody," but do expect that each station will strive for greater creativity within its own format.

Programmers and audience members readily acknowledge the medium's potential for entertainment, information and social integration. But listeners think stations are too profit-oriented, not concerned enough about public service programming and generally out of touch with audience expectations. It's interesting to note that the eight radio stations in this study target adult listeners very much like the people who took part in our focus groups. If the focus group data is reasonably valid -- and we think it is -- it's possible that our programmers are seriously underserving the very target audience they claim to care so much about.

How did this state of affairs come to pass? Two explanations are plausible:

(1) Flaws in the ratings system. Simply put, the current system is not capable of rationally sorting stations into piles of "winners" and "losers." Stations operating in competitive markets increasingly feel pressure to differentiate themselves by targeting very specific audiences. However, a ratings system that steers the greatest rewards to stations that reach the largest number of people between the ages of 25 and 54 creates a sense of schizophrenia for programmers.

(2) Deregulation. In the 1980s, the FCC relaxed limits on radio station ownership, "further reducing diversity and the opportunity for outsiders [to own and program radio stations]" (Bagdikian, 1992, p. 488). Bagdikian says this kind of regulation -- or lack thereof -- is an important source of unimaginative, "mass appeal" radio programming. Programmers who adhere to a strict deregulatory doctrine believe that "the marketplace" should define the public interest. However, our research calls this logic into question. Strict adherence to the dictates of the

advertiser may have created a morass of undifferentiated stations; stations formatted so tightly that much local programming creativity has been purged.

Why do programmers and listeners sometimes talk about radio in such different ways? Simply put, the two groups don't communicate in any direct or meaningful way. The nature of the contemporary radio marketplace dictates that ratings -- not listener wants and needs -- drive programming decisions and exacerbate the power imbalance between the two groups. Further, listeners seldom have a chance to talk among themselves. Members of any radio audience normally function as atomized individuals who have little or no direct influence on programming decisions.

To better understand the relationship between programmers, listeners and the radio marketplace, we turn to the theory of the "public sphere," developed by Jurgen Habermas (1989/1962). In gauging whether acts of public communication -- such as radio programs -- serve the public interest, Habermas measures them against an ideal standard; a theoretical sphere of public communication in which all participants have symmetrically equal chances to participate.

Habermas thought such a public sphere existed among members of the emerging capitalist class in parts of 18th century Europe. Kellner (1990) says this sphere of free public debate gradually declined because of state censorship and corporate media ownership, among other things. By the late 19th century, the trappings of "privatized society" encouraged people to withdraw from the public sphere, and to focus on life as individual consumers and family members (p. 12). Habermas (1989/1962) says true public opinion, the kind that flourished in the public sphere, has been replaced by public relations -- or opinion management -- as a major force in the creation of legitimacy for the institutions of capitalist societies (p. 196).

We may draw some parallels between the downfall of the public sphere and the evolution of the radio industry in America.[13] When product marketing supplanted listener satisfaction as radio's primary function, the chance for critical feedback from listeners was significantly diminished. Today, mass consumption and advertiser acceptability have become standard programming idioms (Hurwitz, 1988, p. 238). Narrowly conceived audience research and a superficial layer of high-visibility public service campaigns are the sole sources of legitimacy for many of today's radio stations.

Let's assume for the moment that it's desirable to reverse this trend, and to work toward the development of a sort of modern-day public sphere of radio programming. How can we do this? Jensen (1986) suggests that listeners could interject their needs and expectations into a public discussion about programming by developing "critical comprehension" skills (see ch. 15). At present, radio listeners lack the institutional cohesion to have much impact on programming decisions. Thus, the assembly of individuals into focus groups -- much like the groups used in this study -- may offer an excellent pathway for the development of listener consciousness and efficacy. We think focus groups should be used to ask listeners what they want from radio -- in a general way -- and to let them perform critical analyses of existing stations and programs.[14] Ultimately, these groups might be used to generate suggestions for new, "listener-friendly" radio formats.

In a capitalist society such as the United States, it is probably naive to think that radio programmers themselves would conduct the kinds of focus groups we advocate; this technique would leave programming decisions and practices open to harsh public criticism.[15] Thus, the task of promoting critical comprehension falls to the academic. If research shows that the rhetoric of radio programmers is significantly out of touch with listener expectations, then academics may feel justified in organizing listener focus groups to (1) gather additional data about the state of the radio market, and (2) foster a sense of consciousness and efficacy among listeners.

Critical comprehension may not develop quickly. And once it does, there's no guarantee that organized groups of "listener advocates" will have much luck when they try to convince radio programmers that audience needs are far more complex than the safe, repetitive programming that's typically offered. However, small efforts today may bring dividends in the years and decades to come. Perhaps one day, radio stations will find ways to utilize constructive feedback from organized groups of listeners -- people skilled in the art of critical comprehension. As Margaret Mead once said, we should "never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has."

TABLE 1

Signature Matrix 1: Programmers

PACKAGE	CORE FRAME	METAPHORS	EXEMPLARS	CATCHPHRASES
ENTERTAINMENT	Radio can provide entertainment, companionship, aesthetic fulfillment and "therapy."	Radio is a "companion;" something you can spend time with. Good deejay work can be like "art."	Some people listen to talk radio because they love it; others listen because they "love to hate it."	"Your easy choice" (easy listening station).
INFORMATION	Radio is the best medium for delivering news and information in a timely fashion.	Radio morning shows provide information "like clockwork."	Information - especially local information - is important. Local public radio listeners complain that they don't get enough local news and information on their favorite stations.	"Your station for news and information." We present the facts... and let the people decide what to do with them.
SOCIAL INTEGRATION	Radio can help foster a sense of community or shared discourse between listeners.	Radio stations should be "sounding boards" or "mirrors of the community."	Public radio and talk radio listeners want to learn, and to hear new ideas. Public radio listeners are highly educated and socially conscious.	Public radio fosters a "sense of connectedness" and helps create a "community of listeners." Rush Limbaugh "tells it the way they feel it."
PUBLIC SERVICE	We can "do good" by sponsoring and publicizing community events.	Public service campaigns can "put a face on our station."	We do a variety of promotions and public service campaigns... to show that we care. We do extended "crisis coverage" when important news stories happen.	We help listeners get through their day. We make "the other person" the hero. We bring people together to do good things.
BUSINESS	Radio is a commodity and radio programmers compete for advertising dollars.	Radio stations fight for survival in highly competitive markets.	Radio faces stiff competition these days from a variety of other entertainment technologies.	You need to make a promise on a premise... and then deliver! There's lots of "narrowcasting" in today's competitive radio markets.
LISTENER EXPECTATIONS	Research your audience... and give them what they want.	Radio programming is not brain surgery! You just do the research, learn what they want, and five it to them.	We didn't listen to audience concerns, and ratings dropped; when we addressed audience concerns, ratings went back up.	You tell us what you want, and we'll give you more of it. We "superserve" our audience. Facts (as determined by audience research) don't lie.

TABLE 1 (continued)

DEPICTIONS	ROOTS	CONSEQUENCES	APPEALS
The adult audience in our city enjoys provocative talk programming. It also enjoys "mature" music (classical and other "softer" formats).	People turn to FM when they want to hear good music. That's why classical and "easy listening" formats are so popular in offices.	A good FM music station will attract listeners.	Formulaic radio formats blunt the creativity of air talent, and also do a disservice to listeners. Let's bring back "full-service" radio stations.
Adult listeners in our city are information seekers. They enjoy "water cooler talk" about taxes, education, politics and crime.	Listenership to news and information stations (primarily AM) is typically low at work because of (1) lack of signal penetration and (2) formats that demand a great deal of attention.	If you provide a consistent flow of information, people will subconsciously tune to your station. If your on-air talent puts a "positive spin" on news and information, listeners may digest it more easily.	[No entries in this cell. All program directors interviewed think their station (s) provide adequate news and information.
Many adult listeners in our city are highly educated, yet not necessarily motivated by money. They would rather focus on the learning and sharing of new ideas.	Public radio listeners contact station programmers by either pledging money, or not pledging it. Both kinds of activity carry a message.	Stations that serve as "sounding boards" or "mirrors of the community" normally do well.	If we "take the high road" and get more involved in community events and promotions, we can steal some of the local public radio audience.
Our listeners want to hear about "day-to-day" concerns; families, finances, crime, education and weather.	Community "ascertainments" drive our news and public service programming.	If we make "the other person" seem like a hero, we (the station) may become a hero in their eyes. That's one way to gain listeners.	[No entries in this cell. All program directors interviewed think they're doing a good job with public service programming.]
Adult radio stations in our city target 35-49 year old listeners with middle-to-high household incomes.	"Narrowcasting" is prevalent because every program director wants a "piece of the 25-54 pie." Programming decisions are part research and part intuition. Sometimes intuition (business sense) overrides.	Tune-outs: bad commercials, bad talent, bad programming and bad technical quality. The more you "narrowcast," the more potential listeners you'll lose.	Radio programmers should not be shackled by the dictates of flawed ratings methodologies and inexperienced media buyers.
Our radio market is like a "donut," with young, white collar listeners in the hole (the city), and rural, "grassroots" listeners in the donut (outlying areas).	Good audience research leads to good targeting... and successful programming. Public radio succeeds because its programs reflect the values of socially-conscious "baby boomers."	If your programs don't fall in line with the prevailing values of the community, you may lose audience members. If you target narrowly and "superserve" an audience, you'll lock it in.	In general, radio stations should do more high quality audience research.

TABLE 2

Signature Matrix 2: Audience

PACKAGE	CORE FRAME	METAPHORS	EXEMPLARS	CATCHPHRASES
ENTERTAINMENT	Radio can create or enhance a desired mood.	Radio is a "legal drug" which can sedate or stimulate.	When you hear a song, you remember what you were doing when that song was popular. I listen in the car, to stay awake on a long trip.	Good radio programs can stretch your imagination.
INFORMATION	We appreciate - and depend on - the news and information that radio stations provide.	Radio stations are like omnipresent beings, from which listeners seek guidance.	My clock radio is set to go on... so I can hear the morning news. There's enough national news on the radio. I want more local news and weather.	You learn something from news and information programs.
SOCIAL INTEGRATION	Radio stations can connect individuals with their community, and with the world at large.	Radio stations are like "switchboards;" they allow listeners to plug into their communities.	Call-in programs create a sense of community. When you're really isolated from other people, radio can be the central focus of attention.	"Being in touch" "Feeling involved"
PUBLIC SERVICE	Legitimate public service programming is not a priority with most stations.	Radio stations (and programmers) are like children; they must be monitored to ensure good behavior.	If a station is down at the art fair - and they say it's really great - they can trick me into going.	Radio stations merely pay "lip service" to the public service concept.
BUSINESS	Stations are more concerned with making money than with serving listeners.	Radio stations suffer from "tunnel vision;" they concentrate on making money above all else.	Radio stations worry more about commercials than listeners. Programs are so repetitive, at times, that it seems like management doesn't want to rock the boat; they don't want to offend anyone.	It seems like radio stations often program to the "lowest common denominator," so they can sell to the greatest number of people.
LISTENER EXPECTATIONS	We want programming that's more creative... that challenges the intellect.	Some radio stations come across like dehumanized computers.	It seems like every radio station in the country took part in the same market study, and decided to play the same songs.	We want "more variety" and "more diversity."

TABLE 2 (continued)

DEPICTIONS	ROOTS	CONSEQUENCES	APPEALS
Radio can be used in a variety of contexts. It enhances a variety of moods.	People listen to radio programs that provide appropriate "background;" programs they can listen to casually, while doing something else.	If a station provides the appropriate accompaniment for my activities at a given moment, I'll keep listening to it.	Stations should become more "in-tune" with the emotional needs of their listeners.
Radio offers much-needed information.	People depend on radio, because the medium has offered timely information on a daily basis... and in times of emergency.	If a station provides timely and important information on a regular basis, people will tune in.	Radio stations should provide their listeners with information that's not available through any other medium.
Radio is highly valued as a personal medium.	Listeners use radio in a variety of ways, because it is such a "mobile" medium.	If a station provides a forum for airing of important community issues, it can help to create a more informed citizenry.	Stations should provide local perspectives on a wide variety of issues.
Radio stations have monopoly power over the "public airwaves;" they owe us something in return (i.e., more high quality public service programming).	Stations will not provide adequate public service programming unless they're required to do so.	If listeners perceive that a station's public service campaigns amount to little more than self-promoting "hype," they will lower their opinion of that station.	Stations should be required by law to carry a certain amount of high quality public service programming.
Radio stations must program to an audience that doesn't include me; they program to young people who spend the most money.	Radio stations fight for advertising dollars in highly competitive markets. If the programming sounds "safe," it's because programmers feel there's little margin for error.	Tune-outs: too many commercials, obnoxious commercials and formats that sound too much like the formats on other stations.	Each station should broadcast a variety of programs, so that a wide variety of listener needs can be met.
Radio stations are either unable or unwilling to take programming risks.	Stations gravitate toward "safe" or "proven" formats, because they don't want to risk losing any listeners.	If stations in a given market don't offer enough programming variety, listeners will turn to other forms of entertainment, such as music on cassette.	Stations should do more research on local audiences... and provide more programs that are uniquely tailored to their audiences and listening areas.

ENDNOTES

1. In years past, the FCC held that a broadcast station could obtain a license only if the "public interest, convenience or necessity" were thereby served. Though the precise meaning of this phrase has never been clear, it implies a responsibility on the part of all license-holders -- commercial and non-commercial -- to consider explicitly the needs of the people and communities they serve.

   McChesney (1993) and others argue that profit -- rather than listener needs and concerns -- has long been the driving force behind commercial broadcasting in America. Perhaps, then, the FCC's move to let "the marketplace" determine the public interest represents a formalization of the status quo, instead of a major policy shift.

   For more on broadcast deregulation, see: U.S. Federal Communications Commission (1981). Report and Order in the Matter of Deregulation of Radio, 49 FCC 2d 968.

2. We chose to study adult radio because roughly 50 percent of the people in the market we studied are 35 years of age or older. Also, we sensed that radio programmers were ignoring certain segments of the adult audience in their target marketing schemes.

3. Constructionist analysis differs from traditional content analysis in the following way. Content analysts typically focus on the manifest informational content of texts, while those who use the constructionist approach place more emphasis on the interpretive commentary that surrounds this manifest content. For more details, see Gamson, 1989, p. 158.

4. Gamson and Lasch (1983, pp. 399-400) define framing devices in the following way (and with specific reference to the issue culture of the Vietnam War):

   A. METAPHORS - A metaphor always has two parts -- the principal subject that the metaphor is intended to illuminate and the associated subject that the metaphor evokes to enhance our understanding.

   B. EXEMPLARS - Real events of the past or present are frequently used to frame the principal subject. ...The Korean War was probably the most important exemplar for the Vietnam example...

   C. CATCHPHRASES - Commentators frequently try to capture the essence of an event in a single theme statement, tagline, title, or slogan that is intended to suggest a general frame. Catchphrases are attempted summary statements about the principal subject. "Invasion from the North" was the title of the State Department paper produced just prior to the Johnson administration escalation of the Vietnam War in 1965.

D. DEPICTIONS - Packages have certain principal subjects that they characterize in a particular fashion. ...Lyndon Johnson depicted the critics of his Vietnam policy as "nervous nellies..."

E. VISUAL IMAGES - We include here icons and other visual images that suggest the core of a package. The American flag is the most obvious icon associated with the Vietnam package...

NOTE: In this study of local radio programming we, of course, have no visual images to analyze.

5. Gamson and Lasch (1983, p. 400) also define reasoning devices, again, with specific reference to the issue culture of the Vietnam War:

A. ROOTS (CAUSAL ANALYSIS) - A given package has a characteristic analysis of the causal dynamics underlying the set of events. The packages may differ in the locus of this root - that is, in the particular place in a funnel of causality to which the root calls attention. The root provided in the Vietnam package is that of a military attack by a Soviet proxy against a United States ally that is an independent country.

B. CONSEQUENCES - A given package has a characteristic analysis of the consequences that will flow from different policies. Again, there may be differences in whether short or long-term consequences are the focus. The consequences emphasized in the Vietnam example are the negative effects on American national security of a communist takeover of South Vietnam.

C. APPEALS TO PRINCIPLE - Packages rely on characteristic moral appeals and uphold certain general precepts. In the Vietnam example, the principles appealed to included the defense of the weak and innocent against unprovoked aggression and the honoring of one's word and commitment to friends.

6. Gamson and Modigliani (1989) use the constructionist approach to demonstrate the interplay between media discourse and public opinion on a given issue (in this case, the nuclear power controversy). We use the constructionist approach in a somewhat different way; to draw radio programmers and listeners into an indirect "conversation." We serve as mediators in this conversation by keeping the two groups separate, asking similar questions of both sets of people, and then comparing the responses.

7. Quantitative audience data comes from the Arbitron Radio Market Report for Fall 1992, the period when we gathered our interview and focus group data.

Qualitative audience data comes from the Fall, 1991 Birch Radio Quarterly Summary Report. This was the last report issued before Birch Radio went out of business.

Nonetheless, most program directors feel that the qualitative data contained therein continue to accurately describe the demographic makeup of the local radio market.

8. Average Quarter Hour (AQH) shares are ratings figures that describe listenership during very short periods of time. Both Arbitron and Birch credit one quarter hour of listening to a station for each person who tunes in for at least five minutes ...during a given quarter hour.

   The AQH ratings for the time period of Monday through Sunday -- 6 AM to Midnight -- are the most comprehensive measures of a station's ability to attract loyal listeners.

9. We recruited members for this group from several community organizations: a university library system, two school districts, a Quaker meeting, the local B'Nai B'rith Center and the state VFW headquarters. We felt that people from these groups would likely be politically active media users. Also, recruitment from this diverse collection of groups helped us to assemble a focus group that -- aside from gender composition -- resembles a cross section of the local adult community.

10. The packages we found in the transcripts of programmer interviews are the same packages we found in the transcripts of audience focus group sessions. This is not surprising, since we used parallel sets of questions for the two groups.

11. After transcribing interviews with radio programmers -- and the proceedings of audience focus groups -- the two authors divided the analytical task in half; one person constructed a signature matrix to summarize programmer discourse, and the other made a signature matrix based on audience data. This work was done independently.

    Next, we met and compared the two signature matrices. During this process, we established the validity of grouping all responses into six common packages.

12. The programmer of Station H also had two methodological questions about our study. First, he noted that our focus group participants were better educated than the general populace. He thought these people might be predisposed to listen to programs that are intellectually stimulating, rather than "fun and entertaining." He also notes that our findings about "social integration" might have been strengthened by the fact that the study was conducted in the midst of a hotly contested Presidential campaign; a time when listeners' desire for controversial public affairs programming was likely heightened.

    Both points of criticism speak to this programmer's concern that our study did not adequately reflect the perceptions of his "typical listeners."

13. Such parallels must be drawn cautiously. Many scholars have aptly pointed out that the public sphere concept cannot be used, in a literal sense, as the basis for contemporary media analysis. For example, Thompson (1990) wonders whether a public sphere actually existed -- in any pure form -- in the 18th century European societies that Habermas studied. Also, Schudson (1992) maintains that the public sphere concept is inapplicable to analysis of the American media.

These caveats aside, we agree with Thompson that Habermas' public sphere continues to hold some appeal as a normative ideal; a yardstick for measuring media performance. Even though attainment of a true public sphere -- a space in which public communication takes place without distortion or manipulation -- seems an impossibly tall task, we think the public sphere ideal is a noble thing to strive for.

14. We distinguish our approach from that of contemporary radio programmers, who use focus groups primarily to solicit feedback for the purpose of fine-tuning an existing format.

15. Again, programmers are quite skeptical of this process for another reason. They know that listeners often talk freely about the kinds of diverse programming they would like to have. However, they feel the "average listener" may not support this sort of programming by indicating in a ratings diary that he or she actually listens to it on a consistent basis.

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THE STRUGGLE OVER THE MEANING OF ABORTION: A CRITICAL EXAMINATION OF TWO FILMS

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I. INTRODUCTION

The public controversy over the morality of abortion has raged in the United States since the January 22, 1973 Supreme Court decision in Roe v. Wade. The decision made the practice of abortion legal in all 50 states, at least through the first trimester of pregnancy. More than twenty years after this decision, activists on both sides of this highly emotional social and political issue continue the struggle over abortion rights in this country. Recent political developments suggest that the national controversy will not soon end.

A new administration in Washington has recently lifted the so-called "gag rule" preventing family planning counselors at federally funded clinics from even mentioning the word abortion. The "gag rule" was one of the more visible pro-life policies of both the Reagan and Bush administrations.

The Clinton administration is now contemplating who to name to replace Byron White on the Supreme Court, and Harry Blackmun (the author of the Roe v. Wade decision) speaks of retiring from the court. It is at least a possibility that any Clinton nominee to the Supreme Court would be more inclined to support abortion rights than not, thus stemming the addition of supposedly pro-life justices to the court.

Recent high court decisions suggest that the focus of the battle over abortion rights may now shift to individual state legislatures. Several states have bills before their legislatures aimed at restricting a woman's access to abortion and both pro-choice and pro-life activists are lobbying hard for their respective positions.

Not only is the national controversy over abortion widespread, it is also very intense. Recently, a doctor in Pensacola, Florida who performed abortions at a local clinic was killed by a self-proclaimed pro-life activist. As a result, several doctors in the area who worked for clinics at which abortions were performed, resigned. Leaders of both pro-life and pro-choice groups proclaimed their opposition to the use of violence and the new Attorney General, Janet Reno, vowed to use her office to protect a woman's legal right to abortion.

Pro-choice and pro-life activists use a variety of persuasive appeals and media in their attempt to sway public opinion in support of their respective positions. Activists on both sides of the issue agree that one of the most potent weapons in their arsenals are the visual images associated with abortion. The pro-life movement utilizes graphic photographs of aborted late-term fetuses, while the pro-choice movement depicts the tragedy of women mutilated as a result of botched, illegal abortions. The effectiveness of these images in changing attitudes towards abortion has been debated in the scholarly literature. (See, for example, Luker, 1984, Condit, 1990 and Staggenborg, 1991).

Nevertheless, Celeste Condit, in her study of abortion rhetoric, argues flatly that "[w]ithout these compelling and brutal photographs the American abortion controversy probably would not continue" (Condit, 1990, p.79).

While the debate continues over whether the images used by both sides in the abortion controversy are effective in changing public attitudes toward abortion, very little has been done to critically examine the content of these images apart from their success in altering public opinion or the particular rhetorical strategies embodied in the images themselves. Yet, mass communication theory suggests that an important aspect of any persuasive campaign is how the subject of the campaign is portrayed in the content of the persuasive message.

A critical examination of their narrative and visual content can help us better understand how these images are used to manipulate women and men in the contest over the meaning of abortion. The research question being posed is whether there are significant differences in the visual images and discourse of women in pro-choice and pro-life media content and if so, what are those differences?

This study seeks to examine and compare the portrayal of women in two mass-distributed films, **The Silent Scream** and **Abortion: For Survival**. Both films were produced in the mid 1980s by groups associated with the pro-life and pro-choice movements. Dr. Bernard Nathanson, a former abortion practitioner, produced and narrates **The Silent Scream** while **Abortion: For Survival** was produced by the

Fund for a Feminist Majority in cooperation with Ted Turner.

The Silent Scream is by far the better known film. Pro-life activists have argued that it should be shown to every woman who seeks an abortion, and they are lobbying for it to be included in the counseling women are currently mandated to undergo in several states. **Abortion: For Survival** was produced, at least in part, as a direct response of the pro-choice movement to the potent imagery contained in **The Silent Scream** and is often shown in women's studies classes. These films are important because the activists use them to persuade others to support their cause and because thousands of women, and men, are exposed to their highly charged content every year.

A critical examination of the portrayal of women in both of the above-mentioned films is necessary to shed light on why or why not the films succeed in their persuasive endeavor. In addition, this study adds to our knowledge of what messages women receive from the mass media.

Abortion is a major social issue. Approximately 1.5 million women undergo the procedure each year and untold numbers face the decision. The fight over the legal access to abortion for women is much more than an academic area of study. How the fight is joined and the weapons used by both pro-choice and pro-life activists in their struggle affects the emotional, psychological and physical well-being of women. It is important that we learn all we can about the methods employed by those who seek our support in this long-standing war.

There currently is lack of scholarly research on abortion and abortion rhetoric which takes as its central concern the examination of how women are represented visually and narratively. This gap in the literature will be explored in the next section.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Kristin Luker (1984) examines the evolution of abortion as a public policy issue from the 19th century to date. She also examines how present day activists on both sides of the issue think about and deal with abortion utilizing extensive first-person interviews of California activists. Luker's argument that pro-life activists were not persuaded to become involved by the visual images they were exposed to is most important for the present study. She argues that these recruits were already primed for the message contained in the visual images and the images only served to reinforce already existing beliefs and commitments. She does not view the visual tools used by the pro-life movement as important recruiting tools. Condit (1990) has criticized the conclusion drawn by Luker because Luker only studies activists, people already committed to a position on abortion. Luker's conclusions are not applied to the uncommitted in society.

Randall Lake (1984), after taking note of the paucity of work on abortion rhetoric, employs the Burkean construct of the dramatistic cycle as a rhetorical form to analyze anti-abortion rhetoric. Lake argues that the essential motif of anti-abortion rhetoric is grounded in sexual guilt. This guilt leads to the victimization of women and redemption is only possible through childbearing and opposition to abortion.

Lake examines various rhetorical artifacts in the public debate over abortion, including legislative histories, books and articles. He does not examine any visual images. Lake's contribution is the argument that redemption promises a return to innocence and the fetus is the symbol of perfect innocence. Thus, to fully understand the motif outlined by Lake it is necessary to analyze and critique the fetal image.

Condit Railsback (1984) analyzes mass media texts such as newspapers, pamphlets, books and broadcast items from 1960 to 1980 to trace the changes in the public arguments used to discuss abortion. She identifies seven stages in the evolution of the public debate. She focuses on languaging strategies rather than on actors or discrete events to explain the interaction of opposing forces. She concludes that by 1980 each side of the controversy had begun to reach out for new audiences, thus fracturing the narrative of abortion between values of choice, life and family. These values began to dominate the ideographic struggle over abortion.

Martha Solomon (1980) examines material distributed or recommended by a local Right to Life chapter to illustrate the intragroup function of the rhetoric. She is concerned with how rhetoric is employed to overcome two internal dilemmas facing Right to Life. She argues that RTL's first dilemma is that despite its inherently conservative views and arguments, the group advocates civil agitation and even unrest. Additionally, the group faces a dilemma posed by its reliance on moral and ethical claims to make the case against abortion. This makes it difficult for the group to broaden its base of support or assert a non-sectarian character.

Solomon argues that the narratives of RTL employ the motif of continuity about pre- and postnatal life, western cultural tradition and RTL's role in society to create a complex symbolic reality which copes with the dilemmas. Images of endangered fetal life become extremely important to the continuity motif.

Michael Hagan (1976) posits that judicial decisions are important rhetorical artifacts for the critic to examine as they are written as justifications for the court's position. He looks at Justice Blackmun's choice of legal concepts, outside material and precedents in the 1973 Supreme Court decision in Roe v. Wade. Hagan concludes that the decision was not a deduction from absolute legal premises. Consequently, the court was advancing a particular point view which the majority of justices found persuasive at the time. The decision avoided dealing with the issue of fetal life and chose instead to focus on issues of privacy and personhood. Thus, the court's decision, while legalizing abortion, did not completely satisfy either side nor did it settle the central issue of fetal life.

Petchesky (1987) employs a semiotic analysis of the film **The Silent Scream** to understand the "cultural meanings and impact of images...not only on the larger cultural climate of reproductive politics but also on the experience and consciousness of pregnant women." (p.265). She suggests that the film should be viewed not as a medical documentary (the preferred reading) but as a cultural representation embodying "political signs and moral injunctions." (p.267). The author posits that as a result of our particular cultural and historical context, we have come to accept fetal images in the media as accurate representations of real fetuses.

These representations, according to the author, have no reference to the pregnant woman. She notes the almost total lack of women in the film she is decoding. **The Silent Scream** perpetuates a myth of the fetus experiencing itself in space, wholly unconnected to a woman's body. The fetus, used in this manner, has become a fetish, a metaphor for man in space and woman as empty space. She argues that we need to restore women to a central place in the pregnancy scene.

Vanderford (1989) examines newsletters published by pro-choice and pro-life groups in Minnesota between 1973 and 1980 to study the rhetorical strategy of vilification. She argues that this strategy serves important functions for both movements. This strategy posits the opposition as enemy and casts the enemy in a wholly negative light. Vilification ascribes evil motives to the opposition and magnifies their power. The strategy is designed to unify the groups and prime them for urgent action and vigilant self-defense.

The strategy of vilification relies on alienation and division for motivation, and this is a cause for concern to the author. Vanderford suggests that other strategies to promote cohesiveness might have less serious ethical implications.

Stewart, et al.(1989) explain and illustrate the use of a rhetorical strategy they call the rhetoric of transcendence, using the pro-life response to pro-choice as the case study. The central tenet of pro-life rhetoric is that a fetus is a human being and in the hierarchy of human rights, its life comes before the rights of women to privacy or choice.

The authors suggest that **The Silent Scream** is a visual effort to persuade audiences that the fetus is a human being. According to the authors, this film is "the most spectacular and controversial effort to show life and death in the womb." (p.179). It becomes important, then, to analyze **The Silent Scream** and the pro-choice response, **Abortion: For Survival** for their representation of women and the comparisons the films make to the fetus.

Condit (1990), in a seminal work on abortion rhetoric, focuses on the development of the public discourse on abortion. She seeks to describe how the meaning of abortion, its related terms, laws and practices have shifted in the flow of public discourse over time.

Condit devotes a chapter to analyzing the meanings constructed by both pro-choice and pro-life rhetors from the visual images they employ. Unlike Luker, Condit argues that fetal images are persuasive, due mainly to the verbal translation of the images into meanings. **The Silent Scream**, Condit argues, is powerful because it is NOT silent. Without the narration provided by Bernard Nathanson, the ultrasound images are blurred, indistinct and without force. It is the commentary contained in the film which gives it persuasiveness.

Condit's analysis, while insightful, only explores the persuasiveness of the fetal images in the film and not how women are represented in the images or the discourse. Petchesky argues that women must become central to the pregnancy scene. Examining how they are represented visually and within the narratives of rhetorical artifacts then becomes an important task for the rhetorical critic.

Chancer's (1990) essay focuses on the transformation of the debate over abortion from the 1970s to date. She argues that the anti-abortion perspective has become persistent and invasive, transforming the cultural climate in which women face the issue of abortion. She also suggests that the language used to discuss the issue has changed over the last twenty years and now serves to cast "an aura of moral illegitimacy around abortion" (p.115). **The Silent Scream** is cited as an example of how the anti-abortion movement has transformed the debate.

As suggested by the preceding discussion of the literature on abortion rhetoric, little attention has been paid to the visual images and narrative discourse of women in the rhetorical artifacts employed by both sides of the controversy. This paper seeks to fill that research gap.

III. METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study is to examine the representation of women in two films produced by groups involved in the American abortion controversy, **The Silent Scream** and **Abortion: For Survival.** These two films were selected for their importance within the respective pro-life and pro-choice movements. Petchesky (1987) has argued that **The Silent Scream** "marked a dramatic shift in the contest over abortion imagery," (p.264) while Condit (1990), Chancer (1990) and Staggenborg (1991) posit that this film has contributed to the transformation of the public discourse about abortion and the cultural climate in which women face this issue. **Abortion: For Survival** was produced by the Fund for a Feminist Majority in 1989 as a direct response to **The Silent Scream** (Staggenborg, 1991).

Additionally, it is suggested that these films, and other visual images produced by both sides in the abortion controversy, have been utilized as recruiting tools by various groups involved in the abortion controversy (Luker, 1984; Condit, 1990 and Staggenborg, 1991) and as a means to change the terms of the public debate on the issue of abortion (Condit, 1990).

Despite the importance of these two films for the pro-choice and pro-life movements which produced and use the films, no one has examined these films for their representations of women. Petchesky (1987) and Condit (1990), two scholars who have devoted some attention to **The Silent Scream**, focused on the image of the fetus rather than that of the woman. No one has examined the visual images or narrative content of **Abortion: For Survival**.

If, as Petchesky (1987) argues, it is important to "restore women to the pregnancy scene," (p.287), then a significant step in this direction can be taken through works which focus on the images and discourse of women in the major rhetorical artifacts of the current abortion debate.

In order to analyze the representation of women in **The Silent Scream** and **Abortion: For Survival**, this paper will incorporate a variety of methods employed by semioticians, feminist film critics and discourse theorists. This study will compare the films' representation of women on two related levels.

First, this paper will examine the visual images of women through a discussion of each film's iconography. According to Kaplan (1983, p. 18), the iconography of a film includes the mise-en-scene (how women are placed in the scenes), dress, gestures, focus, lighting and other film techniques. By examining the films' iconography we can draw conclusions about how the films create meaning for the audience (Mulvey, 1975, Gledhill, 1984). By examining and making explicit the meanings created by these films we can better understand the myths they perpetuate (Barthes, 1972).

Second, the narratives of the films as they pertain to women will be examined. The paper will analyze the diegesis of each film (the story of the film as evinced through the action, events and settings) to see how the films depict the role of women in the abortion decision or process. We will also examine the discourse of the films to see how women are referred to or what women say, if anything. Gentile (1985) argues that examining the roles of women in film is important because it can reveal the contradictions and gaps that underlie women's roles in the larger social structure (p.64) and reveal how our language reinforces these roles.

This study strives to compare the representation of women in two major works used by either side in the abortion controversy. This examination should reveal the differences and similarities between these two films' representation, visually and narratively, of women.

IV. ANALYSIS

Before decoding the visual images and narratives of women in **The Silent Scream** and **Abortion: For Survival**, it is necessary to describe these two films for readers who might not have seen them. **The Silent Scream** was produced and is narrated by Dr. Bernard Nathanson, an obstetrician and former President of the National Abortions Rights Action League (NARAL). The film was produced in December 1984 and released for broadcast in January 1985. The video was distributed to members of Congress, TV networks, schools and churches (Petchesky, 1987). The resulting media coverage was timed to coincide with the anniversary of Roe v. Wade (Staggenborg, 1991, p. 127).

The Silent Scream is a 28-minute video which purports to depict a "real-time, ultrasound image" of the abortion of a 12-week old fetus[1]. The film has been criticized by many as inaccurate (see note 1) and inflammatory. Condit (1990) and Petchesky (1987), for example, argue that without the narration provided by Dr. Nathanson, the ultrasound image would be inscrutable and without rhetorical impact. The resolution of the ultrasound image, according to Condit, is just "too poor to make a forceful argument in itself" (1990, p.87). The "priming" by Dr. Nathanson is central to the message of the film.

Abortion: For Survival was released in 1989 as a response to **The Silent Scream** (Staggenborg, 1991, p.205). Produced by the Fund for a Feminist Majority in cooperation with Ted Turner, **Abortion: For Survival** begins with a depiction of an aspiration abortion of a 6-week old fetus. What follows is a progression of public health organization leaders, medical and legal experts discussing the practice and politics of abortion. Following the film is a round table debate between pro-choice and pro-life advocates hosted by Martin Agronsky, a cable TV talk show host. This paper will focus on the first portion of the film. The first portion of **Abortion: For Survival** is comparable to **The Silent Scream** in that it purports to depict a "real-time" abortion and then discusses, through a variety of narrators, the reasons why access to abortion is necessary. **The Silent Scream**, too, depicts a "real-time" abortion and its narrator discusses the reasons why abortion should be made illegal. The second part of **Abortion: For Survival** has no counterpart in **The Silent Scream** and, thus, cannot be compared to anything in that film.

The analysis which follows will examine the portrayal of women through a critique of each film's iconography and narrative structure as they pertain to women. The central concern is with how the images and discourse contained in the two films create meaning. The paper will first examine the mise-en-scene to critique how women are constructed visually in both films.

There are only three segments within **The Silent Scream** in which women appear. The first segment is roughly five minutes into the 28-minute production. The woman is introduced by Nathanson only as "the pregnant woman." She is first seen from the back as she silently enters an examining room dressed in a hospital gown and lies down on the examination table. The room is dominated by the ultrasound machine and the table. The woman is followed into the room by a man who "suitably" drapes her body with a sheet to prepare her for the ultrasound exam. The woman is perfectly made-up and coifed, but does not appear particularly distinctive suggesting, perhaps, that she could be any one of us. We glimpse her staring passively at the computer screen, which is out of her view, while the male technician takes the ultrasound device and roams around her belly.

The room is sterile and brightly lit, with nothing to distract the woman or the viewer from the central task- to look through the woman to "visualize" the "unborn child." The gaze is decidedly male (Mulvey, 1975). We see the woman from the male technician's point of view, an obstacle to be overcome in the search for the fetus.

The woman is positioned not for her comfort or to give her a clear view of the computer screen, rather, for the ease of the technician in performing the exam. The woman, qua woman, is absent except as a vehicle for the examination of the doctor's "second patient," the fetus.

This interpretation is reinforced visually by the other two segments of **The Silent Scream** featuring women. In the first of these, another unidentified, but presumably pregnant, woman is lying on an operating table. The screen is dominated by the male doctor with his hands going in and out of her vagina. Her legs are raised in stirrups and her buttocks are shaking violently as the doctor inserts various instruments into her body. The woman's hands are seen grasping metal rails for support as two masked nurses hold her legs still. Over Nathanson's narration we hear the loud rattle of a vacuum. We see an image of violence being perpetuated against the woman, yet she is absent visually and narratively from the action being described by Nathanson.

The final images of women contained in **The Silent Scream** appear at the very end of the film. Six women are introduced as "victims, much like their unborn children." A slow, mournful piano cadence can be heard in the background as the images of these women appear on the screen.

The six women are heavily coded to represent the pro-life version of the type of woman who undergoes an abortion. They are white, in their late twenties, well-dressed and, again, appear with make-up and neatly coifed hair. Their anguished faces are juxtaposed with traditional female settings, they are seen in the kitchen, the bedroom and on the living room sofa. One woman is holding a baby's toy, a metonymic representation of her lost child.

The women are the epitome of guilt and shame. None of them look directly into the camera, but silently stare off camera or cast their eyes downward. We see their faces, but the women are turned away from us because, as Dr. Nathanson tells us, they have been "mutilated," "castrated," their wombs "infected" and "destroyed" by the "unfeeling" abortion industry. They have no place in the world and are depicted visually as alone, isolated and despairing.

The images of the women are intercut with graphic pictures of "dismembered" fetuses in plastic pails, the discarded remnants of dead babies. The visual circle is complete, killed and mutilated children are equated with the "castrated" women whose uteruses have been "destroyed." Neither the women nor the babies have identities, voices or a place in the world.

By contrast the screen in **Abortion: For Survival** is dominated by active, vocal women. The first scene is the primary response of the film to the abortion depicted in **The Silent Scream**. The representation of the abortion experience as it relates to women is starkly different.

In **Abortion: For Survival**, two women appear with a timer boxed in the right hand corner of the screen. The woman undergoing the procedure is seen in almost from her level on the table, knees in front and with her face and torso clearly visible. She is younger than the women in **The Silent Scream** and somewhat more distinctive. This woman has braces on her teeth, is wearing casual street clothes and has long, tousled hair. Significantly, she is not silent. We see her talking with the female doctor or nurse in attendance and we hear her speak in the montage which overlays the abortion procedure.

The setting of this abortion is also sharply contrasted to the one depicted in **The Silent Scream**. Here we see no machines, no male doctor inserting instruments into the woman's body, no medical equipment of any kind is in view of the camera. The setting is calm, no hoard of medical personnel holding a violently shaking woman down; no loud roaring of equipment, no grasping hands or vaginal openings in sight.

The viewer is presented with a softly lit room and a comforting, supportive environment. The music is quick-paced and up-tempo. We catch a glimpse of a colorful pillow case and see a female medical attendant in a lab coat standing next to the woman and gently holding her hand. This scene is significant in that the face of the medical establishment in **Abortion: For Survival** is female as opposed to male in **The Silent Scream.**

The procedure is visually presented as non-traumatic and quick (the timer and the female narrator tell us the procedure took 1 minute, 24 seconds), whereas the abortion depicted in **The Silent Scream** was more violent and seemed to take much longer.

During and after the abortion the woman is not isolated. A montage of the speakers to follow includes her visually and narratively on the screen and places her in the company of men and women who support her decision to have the abortion. Again, contrast this representation to the women Dr. Nathanson presents after their abortions. This young woman looks directly at the interviewer (although not at the camera), she is not silent, nor is she ashamed.

The remainder of **Abortion: For Survival** presents a variety of public health, medical, legal and service organization leaders discussing the need for safe, legal abortion services. The experts in this film are also quite different from Dr. Nathanson, the sole voice in **The Silent Scream**. The experts we see in this film are a diverse group of individuals, dominated by women. We are introduced to women of color, Asian, Hispanic and European men and women, which functions to visually reinforce the narrative that abortion affects all types of women. The film uses a variety of techniques which lend credibility to the women depicted.

First, each woman is introduced by name and title. These women hold important positions in society. Second, the camera angle is direct and the women are shot in close-up, they dominate the screen. Finally, the women are placed in offices, laboratories, congressional committee hearings, in front of imposing shelves of books (a la Nathanson's office) and accompanied by sophisticated graphics containing pie charts and bar graphs explained by the female narrator. These settings suggest that the women possess some authority and knowledge and are active in their support for abortion rather than passive victims who have been duped by feminist propaganda.

The visual representation of the female experts in **Abortion: For Survival** is overcoded to challenge the solitary male authority figure in **The Silent Scream**. They are visual representations of women around the world who would be affected if abortion were made illegal. They come not just from the medical-scientific field (represented by sympathetic male doctors), but include lawyers, public health advocates, and social service providers. They have seen "first-hand" the experiences of women in the world who do not have access to safe, legal abortions and other methods of birth control. Unlike the women in **The Silent Scream**, the women in **Abortion: For Survival** are an integral part of the narrative struggle over abortion.

In her semiotic analysis of **The Silent Scream**, Rosalind Petchesky argues that the fetus, in utero, is fetishized as a "metaphor for 'man' in space..." She asks "...where is the mother in that metaphor? She has become empty space." (1987, p.270). I would argue that the women in the metaphor as laid out in **The Silent Scream** are "empty space" only after they have been "castrated." They are first visually and narratively reduced to their uteruses.

The Silent Scream accomplishes the narrative reduction of women to their uteruses first, as Petchesky argues, by decontextualizing the "womb" from the woman. We are told by Dr. Nathanson that the "unborn child" is "orientated" within its "sanctuary" but this sanctuary is never described as being attached to the woman.

Second, Dr. Nathanson separates women from their own physicality and experiences by suggesting that women have no knowledge of their bodies or "the true nature of their unborn children." Women are ignorant vessels, wholly unconnected to the experience of pregnancy and easily manipulated by the "sinister hand" of "crime syndicates" and "feminists". Women must be educated and enlightened, but only to insure they come to a "decent regard for the priority of human life."

The women about whom the experts speak in **Abortion: For Survival** are described in very different terms. We see women actively engaged in a variety of struggles. We see them scrounging for food in garbage dumps, working in fields under primitive agricultural conditions, walking streets teeming with people, at home surrounded by bedraggled, often skeletal children. Almost all of the images of women who "desperately need" access to abortion include children.

The narrative message is constructed to counter the pro-life depiction of abortion rights activists as radical feminists seeking abortions to pursue careers and avoid motherhood or ignorant women duped into abortion for the profit of the "abortion industry." The women in **Abortion: For Survival** are quite different from the solitary, passive, white, "everywomen" seen in **The Silent Scream** in that they seek abortion "almost instinctively" to preserve not their choice of occupations, but their families and their own "psychological and physical well-being."

The women who seek abortions in **Abortion: For Survival** are, we are told, responsible users of birth control who become pregnant through the failure of medical technology. If they do not use birth control responsibly, it is because government policy or their own financial circumstances deny them access to the services they need. The women who most often have abortions are not well-heeled, upper middle class, white American women. They are poor, non-white African, Asian, Latin-American women who live in underdeveloped countries with little access to medical care of any kind. The film uses two different types of narratives to bridge the identification gap between affluent, western women and the women in underdeveloped nations.

We first hear the tale of two American women, Eloise (nicknamed "Happy" by her brother) and an unidentified but "bright and attractive 18-year old" girl and how they died as a result of "botched, back-alley abortions." These narratives are a common rhetorical device of the pro-choice movement (see Condit, 1990 and Luker, 1984). Eloise died in 1934 from hemorrhaging following her "back-alley abortion." The male doctor who was called to the house to treat her refused to do so. We are told that many doctors were afraid of the legal sanctions which could be imposed upon them if they treated women who suffered the effects of a "botched" abortion. This tale is then compared to the sanctions imposed today on clinic workers in Third World nations preventing them from offering even counseling about abortion.

The second woman whose story we hear is the "bright, attractive, 18-year old girl" who died in an emergency room in this country in 1967 or 1968 (before abortion became legal in this country). She died of blood poisoning after her uterus was perforated (perhaps by a coat hangar or crochet needle?). She died despite the heroic efforts of sympathetic, male doctors (the narrators of the story). Her family's life, like Eloise's brother's and the families of the women who die overseas from unsafe abortions, will "never again be the same." The narrative circle binding all women together is complete when Billy Avery, president of the Black Women's Health Care Project, tells us that black women will be affected first, but all women will be affected tomorrow.

The second narrative employed in the text of **Abortion: For Survival** is the discussion of the contradictory position women occupy in the struggle over abortion. The assault by religious groups against abortion is characterized as an assault against all forms of contraception. Quotes from pro-life advocates are used to illustrate their opposition to birth control pills, the IUD and RU486. We don't have enough forms of birth control now, we are told and the pro-life forces want to deny women access to them all.

Without access to birth control, Christina Pickles (the narrator) tells us, more women will be forced to rely on abortion as a means of birth control. She tells us "this seems like such a contradictory position." The position is explained, however, by David Grimes, a former CDC scientist who tells us that the real issue underlying the abortion controversy in this country is religious opposition to sexuality. This is as close as the narrative gets to arguing for abortion as a matter of choice for sexually active women.

The contradiction is revealed as the narrative quickly returns to the context of women in the family. Women are needed to raise children and they seek abortion to preserve the psychological, physical and financial resources needed to care for their families. We are told of the thousands of abandoned, abused and neglected children roaming the streets of Brazil and populating the hospital wards in the United States.

The real horror of illegal abortion is, finally, not the image of dead women, but rather the specter of unrestrained population growth and orphaned children. This, according to Dr. Sharon Camp, the vice president of the Population Crisis Committee, is the "common denominator" for people all over the world.

Ultimately, to reach out to a larger audience, **Abortion: For Survival** constructs a tale of women who seek abortion as a last resort in order to preserve themselves for their families, for children who are wanted and loved. The film closes with Eloise's brother reading a portion of a letter she wrote him before having her abortion. In the letter she asks him "Is it fair to keep on having children you can't feed or clothe properly or keep warm or take care of when they are ill?" She seeks his "understanding" in her "struggle." It is children who "should be given a fair chance at life," not women. Women's lives are important, not for their intrinsic worth, but for their importance in a social structure which makes them the prime care-giver for children.

V. Discussion and Conclusions

Celeste Condit (1984, 1990) suggests that the public narrative of abortion had "reached an important plateau" by the mid- to late 1980s. She argued that:

> "...elements of a new ideological structure had become widely accepted by the public-abortion was legal, a majority favored a woman's 'choice,' and millions of women were exercising the option of legal abortion. However, this structure was tightly hedged by other values, and 'choice' was thus limited by 'life' and 'family.'" (1984, p. 419)

This argument is borne out by the preceding analysis of the visual and narrative representation of women in **The Silent Scream** and

Abortion for Survival. Women in our social structure are still largely defined and constructed around their role as mother and care-giver. Despite the more progressive image of women contained in **Abortion: For Survival** as professional, articulate and active, women were still visually and narratively represented primarily in relation to their service to children.

Moreover, both films portray women as victims of a male-dominated world. **The Silent Scream** labels women as victims and the dominant image of women is one of passive compliance at the hands of "unfeeling abortionists." Women in **Abortion: For Survival** are denied access to the means of their own survival by patriarchal government policies promulgated by men who "don't care" if women die and by pro-life males who think "sex is disgusting."

Women seek abortion in "self-defense," not as a positive right to control their own bodies. Lynn Chancer (1990) supports this view when she argues the cultural climate in which women face the issue of abortion has changed in the twenty years since the practice was legalized. She suggests that the language used now to discuss abortion serves to cast "an aura of moral illegitimacy" around the issue (p.115). Women apologize for having abortions because the culture now suggests that there is a moral and ethical price to be paid by women who undergo the procedure.

In this sense, then, Luker (1984) is wrong to dismiss the power of the visual contest over abortion. These rhetorical artifacts contribute to, and are a reflection of, the ambivalence with which our society now regards abortion and the women who have them.

As this analysis points out, the difficulty for pro-choice rhetors in overcoming the "fetishized" fetal image is the still contradictory position of women in a male-dominated society. We are not yet able to construct images of women as separate and distinct individuals, who, like the fetus, have positive, inalienable rights.

The preceding analysis has contributed to our understanding of how meaning is created by pro-choice and pro-life rhetorical artifacts and the messages contained in them for women. Women are constructed differently in the films, but still occupy the same social position in both films. The primary identity of women is still located in the role of mother and child-bearer. This might explain why the socially conservative pro-life rhetoric is argued to be more persuasive to the public (Condit, 1990, Chancer, 1990, Stewart, et. al., 1989) than the pro-choice position.

Further, we now have a better understanding of the messages received when viewing these films. The overriding message is that women are victims, either of "sinister" underworld figures or of "unfeeling, uncaring" men. Women are put on the defensive, visually and narratively in both **The Silent Scream** and **Abortion: For Survival**. The positive right to abortion for women, especially those who choose not to become part of a traditional family unit, continues to be problematized, contributing to the socially ambivalent position of women.

More work needs to be done in studying the representation of women in abortion artifacts. This paper only examined two films produced by groups involved in the abortion controversy. Are the conclusions drawn in this analysis borne out in other works by these groups? What contrasts and similarities might be found in popular works on the issue of abortion? These are important questions which deserve our attention. As both films demonstrate, abortion affects millions of women all over the world. The struggle over its meaning goes to the core of what it means to be a woman in our society.

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NOTES

1. The accuracy of the fetal image in **The Silent Scream** have been a major source of controversy. See Planned Parenthood Federation of America, The Facts Speak Louder: Planned Parenthood's Critique of "The Silent Scream." New York: Planned Parenthood Federation of America, n.d. and Levine. Judith. 1985. "Blinding Us with Science." Village Voice, July 16:21-24. A basic criticism contained in these works is that the fetus depicted in **The Silent Scream** is much older that the stated 12 weeks.

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Exploring Birth-or-Abortion Decisions: Methodology for Researching Women's Private Values

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Presented at Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication's 76th Annual Convention at Kansas City for the Commission on the Status of Women, Wednesday, August 11, 1993

Exploring Birth-or-Abortion Decisions: Methodology for Researching Women's Private Values

Not ideas about the thing, but the thing itself
—Wallace Stevens

Like the moment when the ambiguous figure shifts from a vase to two faces, the recognition that there is another way to look at a problem may expand moral understanding.
—Carol Gilligan and Jane Attanucci, "Two Moral Orientations: Gender Differences and Similarities"

Researchers in the social sciences have long used the open interview to explore phenomena whose nature is unclear.[1] They recognize the utility in letting subjects describe their feelings and ideas in their own words until, collectively, these words begin to give form to the unknown. Despite the relative freedom of the interview, most methods texts still demand that investigators maintain a position of authority, that they ask each subject the same questions, and that they reveal little about their own reaction verbally or non-verbally (Oakley, 1981). Feminists have adopted the open interview as a useful way to explore the unknowns of women's experiences. In doing so, they also have pushed to relax the method's rigidity by reducing the interview's hierarchical structure and allowing subjects greater control and interplay with the investigator. Such changes, they claim, increase the depth to which the researchers can probe, especially with female subjects, who are particularly wary of hierarchy and emotional distance.

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[1] In the communication field, for example, Gordon L. Dahnke and Katherine I. Miller (1990) say that exploratory research can use "a wide range of observational methods," including the unstructured interview (p.314).

We contend that our research findings would not have been possible without applying this evolving methodological approach. We interviewed women (and a few men) about nearly 100 birth-or-abortion decisions, and we conducted another 29 interviews with professionals who counsel and care for these women. We explored the questions of: (1) whether there is a gap between the public discourse on the abortion issue and the private experience of abortion decision making, and, if so, (2) what might be at work in the private realm that is missing from the public debate.

After a thorough search through our data for patterns that link women's stories across a great variety of circumstances and outcomes, we drew the following conclusions:

•Women do speak privately about their own birth-or-abortion decisions of those of friends and relatives in a very different language than the language allowed in the public debate.

•Their language reflects a moral standard that is absent from public discourse on the issue.

•In private, women admit to a moral and emotional complexity that they often believe betrays their pro-choice or pro-life political convictions.

•The question of whose "rights," those of the fetus or those of the woman, should prevail is virtually irrelevant in private decisions, although it is a central argument in the public debate.

•Likewise, the issue of when life begins, which is pivotal in the public debate, appears to be peripheral to private decision makers.

•How well women cope after giving birth or having an abortion after a troubled pregnancy seems to be more a function of how well they control their own decision than which outcome they choose.

•Many women feel coerced by people or circumstances into decisions that they do not actually control.

•American public policy does little to make birth a viable option for women in a variety of less-than-ideal circumstances.

•Lastly, the language of private experience has been muted by the dominant public discourse, and the disharmony between the two has been virtually unexplored.

In 1983, when we began an investigation of women's birth-or-abortion decisions, we sought to explore a vast unknown of private experience masked by public controversy. We wanted to be sensitive to these female decision makers in all ways, knowing that the memories we probed might be painful. We especially wanted to stay keenly alert to language and values that might be hard to hear behind the din of public discourse. Additionally, we were worried about imposing our own values and assumptions on the research. We looked then to the looseness of the open interview as a way of letting our subjects tell us the stories of their experiences, in their own language, with our prompts serving only to help bring forth details of a narrative that they controlled.

In a widely praised application of the open-interview technique, William G. Perry, Jr., questioned undergraduates at Harvard College between 1954 and 1963 in an attempt to discover how they came to orient themselves "to the relativism which permeates the intellectual and social atmosphere of a pluralistic university" (1970, p. 4). As an academic counselor, Perry worried that too many Harvard freshmen were foundering, despite their great intelligence and responsible efforts. "When bright people act stupid, we are in the presence of powerful forces," Perry said (1987). Being unsure just what those "powerful forces" might be, Perry carefully constructed interview questions that would allow his student subjects to frame their own thoughts and to minimize the extent to which they might speak only about what they thought the researchers wanted to hear. Perry followed a general interview form developed by Merton (1952) and opened with the broad question: "Why don't you start with whatever stands out for you about the year?" (Perry, 1970, p. 19).

Similarly, feminist researchers often explore "powerful forces" that remain hidden within women's experiences and unnoticed in a culture dominated by the views and voices of men. Like the Harvard students, women can seem to be failing when they are measured by prevailing standards, but as feminist researchers have found, prevailing standards may be the wrong measure. In the field of psychology, for example, researchers from Sigmund Freud to Lawrence Kohlberg (1981) have claimed that their findings explain "human" psychological and moral development. They had little notion that their predominantly male research samples might mask gender differences (Gilligan, 1982). Perry, too, whose sample was almost entirely male undergraduates, traced a developmental path followed by young men. But 16 years later, feminist researchers found that the path of female intellectual and moral development took a startlingly different route (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, &

Tarule, 1986). Like Perry, Mary Belenky, Blythe Clinchy, Nancy Goldberger and Jill Tarule began each interview with a broad, open question: "Looking back, what stands out for you over the past few years?" (p. 11). Unlike Perry, these researchers chose an all-female sample and selected them from a wide variety of socio-economic circumstances. They explained to each woman that they were interested in her experience "—and in women's experience—because it had been so often excluded as people sought to understand human development" (p. 11).

Psychologist Carol Gilligan has opened the interview process further in her quest to fill what she calls "a startling omission: the absence of girls from the major studies of adolescence" (1990, p. 1). She and Lyn Mikel Brown sought to explore how "powerful forces" work at the crossroads of puberty, a long documented danger point at which many girls sink into depression or lose vitality, outspokenness, and a sense of self and character. Brown and Gilligan already knew from previous work that an inner sense of connection with others is a central organizing feature of girls' and women's development and that psychological crises in women's lives stem from disconnections (Belenky, et al., 1986). What Brown and Gilligan, wanted to explore was the nature of the crises girls face as they try to orient this female ethic of relationship in an adult world that devalues it. But early in the project, Brown, Gilligan and their assistants realized that the girls who were to be their subjects were resisting them. In exploring this resistance, the researchers learned that it was the very nature of what they were exploring that was causing their traditional interviewing methods to break down and become ineffective.

"Holding firmly to the same questions for each girl, for example, prevented us from following girls to the places they wished to go.... (W)e began to sense that by staying with our method we were in danger of losing the girls" (Brown & Gilligan, 1992, pp. 11-12). The girls mistrusted the intrusive researchers at their school, whom they saw as authoritarian and uncaring about who they were collectively or individually. To the girls, the researchers' exploitation, especially in the absence of an ongoing relationship, violated their fundamental sense of what was ethical. Consequently, Brown and Gilligan departed from the usual hierarchical interviewing structure—which had caused the girls to see them as god-like inquisitors, who asked questions and then went away to secretly interpret, and perhaps distort, the girls' responses—and to move instead into a more genuine dialogue with the girls. The planned research design "collapsed" into the unpredictability of a more equal and ongoing relationship. Yet the investigators found new clarity and journeyed to deeper levels of understanding (Brown, et al., 1992, pp. 15-16) Under their new protocol, the researchers repeatedly "listened" to audio tapes and transcriptions, asking not only who was speaking but who was listening, not only to what was said but what was not. They attempted to recognize the "living utterance" and the importance of interpreting language in the relational context in which it was spoken (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 276). Their method allowed the researchers to "hear" the signs of "self-silencing or capitulation," when the girls were afraid to follow their own feelings because those feelings bucked the cultural norms (Brown, et al., 1992, p. 30).

In this and similar ways, research on women's speech, most of it done in the last two decades, has begun to affect how women researchers use the interview. Carole Edelsky (1981) found, for example, that women participate more actively when conversation is informal and collaborative than when it follows a one-turn-at-a-time model. Susan Kalcik (1975) describes women in consciousness-raising groups engaging in collaborative storytelling, in which speaker and audience meld. Women collaborate by drawing out one anothers' stories, nodding and speaking in ways that show support, and sharing similar emotions and experiences. Such patterns empower the speaker to open up creatively and emotionally. They stand in sharp contrast to hierarchical modes that can make the speaker feel guarded. "Revealing emotions is a disadvantage only when others are being reserved and refusing to share or to show emotion" (Thorne, 1983, p.19).

Phenomenologists also have recognized the value of a flexible line between researcher and participant. Bogdan and Taylor (1975) recommend in their methods text that "the interviewer-subject relationship should consist of a partnership," and that "[i]t is probably unfair and undoubtedly counterproductive for the researcher to completely hold back his or her own feelings" (p. 108). They suggest the researcher seek a happy medium between being too open and too closed (Bogdan & Taylor, 1975). The more common paradigm for the social research interview in methodology textbooks is rigid, Ann Oakley (1981) contends, and owes more to "a masculine social and sociological vantage point than to a feminine one" (p. 38). It appeals to values such as "objectivity, detachment, hierarchy and 'science' as an important cultural activity which takes priority over people's more individualized concerns" (p. 38). Like Gilligan, Oakley found it difficult to apply textbook interviewing styles, especially because she was talking to women about the intimate matter of childbirth. Oakley even argues that when a feminist interviews women, the standard prescribed interviewing practices are both practically and morally indefensible. First, she argues (as Bogdan and Taylor did) that the goal of discovering people through interviewing is best achieved when "the relationship of interviewer and interviewee is non-hierarchical and when the interviewer is prepared to invest his or her own personal identity in the relationship" (p. 41). Participants are more likely to be forthcoming when they feel the interviewer is empathetic than when they feel they are being asked to dangle alone in the wind. Second, Oakley saw herself not only as a data collector for researchers but also for the women whose lives were being researched. Third, she found it artificial and unproductive to refuse to answer participants' questions or give them personal feedback, as textbook protocol would require, because many women expect reciprocity for intimacy.

What these feminists are saying is that the rigor of the social scientific method can be so rigid that it becomes ineffective. Investigators need to be humble in the face of their own ignorance, especially when their research is exploratory. A rigid interview format can hide their own assumptions and contaminate the findings. If the research is truly to explore unfamiliar ground, the participant, not the researcher, must define the variables in her own words. Almost as rich as the participant's speech—as Brown and Gilligan found (1992)—are her pregnant pauses, her body language, and facial expressions, hinting at a wide horizon of meaning that neither the researcher nor the participant may fully understand (Ihde, 1976).

Open interviews then, as conducted by exploratory and feminist scholars, beckon forth narratives through which the participants frame their own lives. These stories reveal two things simultaneously: women's experiences and the way women shape their experience through narrative in their memories. Interpretation of their stories also requires, as Brown and Gilligan discovered in their research with girls, a sensitivity to the puzzling chasm women sense between the lessons of their own experience and the socially constructed reality of a male-voiced culture. As anthropologist Shirley Ardener (1975) has said, "appropriate language" in public discourse is often "encoded" by males, putting women at a disadvantage in expressing their own ideas. Women may find that some of their perceptions cannot be easily expressed in the idiom of the dominant language structure because the discourse has been defined by men (Ardener, 1975, p. ix). Cheris Kramarae (1981) argues that because women's communication is "muted" within the dominant culture, it is just as important to know the perceptions of women's speech by the receivers as it is to know how the women themselves speak.

When we decided to explore women's birth-or-abortion decision making, we knew we were venturing into a mine field. Our interest was triggered by an anecdotal observation: that when women spoke privately about their own abortion experiences or those of their friends and relatives, they used a very different language than the one that dominated the public debate. More significantly, we noticed that women admitted privately to a sense of moral and emotional complexity that they believed betrayed their pro-choice or pro-life political convictions.

To explore these observations meant asking women to tell us about experiences that were both intimate and troubling. We also knew that the vituperative public debate, which had taken nearly exclusive control of public discourse on abortion, could make our subjects especially wary of our motives and potential judgments. We also suspected that the debate could lead women to doubt themselves if their own experiences or feelings seemingly betrayed their political position on abortion. We knew our interviews would have to be careful and sensitive to draw out experiences that might be buried beneath guilt and shame or years of silence and self-censorship.

We decided to explore (1) whether there was indeed a gap between the public discourse on the abortion issue and the private experience of abortion decisions and, (2) if so, what might be at work in private that was missing from the public debate. These, then, became our research questions. We also decided to use the women's own narratives in our writing in the hope that they might bring the complexity found in personal experience into the abstract, black-or-white, vicious public debate on abortion. These stories, perhaps, could broaden the scope of that debate into something more resembling a dialogue.

The literature was almost devoid of personal narratives about abortion decision making when we began our research in 1983. (See, for example, Linda Bird Francke's (1978) *The Ambivalence of Abortion.*) Women's personal silence on the issue was presumably grounded in a fear of considerable public judgment against them for having or even considering abortions. The silence, one of passivity and powerlessness by those who cannot make their experience known (Gal, 1991), was broken with a clamor when a number of authors published horror stories about illegal abortions before *Roe vs. Wade* or emotional stories about abortion since legality (Bonavoglia, 1991; Howe, 1986; Messer & May, 1988). The narratives in these works generally were rhetorical, as defined by Lucaites and Condit (1985, p. 98), chosen and told to persuade the reader that America should not return to the dark days before *Roe*.

While such narratives served rhetorical and historical purposes, they lacked any semblance of objectivity. Arguments were raging over abortion, and the American public was polled time and again for its pro-life or pro-choice opinions; but virtually no one was asking women who had made birth-or-abortion decisions to give a straight-forward account of their experience. We wanted to select interview subjects who, regardless of the political merit of their story, represented a broad range of circumstances. We also wanted the subjects to control their own narratives so that we could remain as true as possible to their perceptions of what they experienced. In order to tackle these objectives, we set several ground rules for our research interviews:

1. We would listen to how women told their own stories in their own voices as a means of finding what factors they felt were important in their decision making.
2. We would promise to disguise our subjects' identities so that they need not worry about their private feelings and experiences being exposed.
3. We would strive to balance abortion decisions with birth decisions in a wide variety of circumstances.
4. We would promise our subjects that their decision would not be judged and that our book would not take either a pro-life or a pro-choice political position.

All four stipulations proved crucial to our findings. We began every interview by asking the subject to describe her circumstances at the time she became pregnant. This "tell-us-your-story" approach allowed women to recount their decisions as they remembered them unfolding in their lives. The women constructed their own narratives, automatically emphasizing, without direction from the investigators, the factors they regarded as central to their decision making and its outcome. Our prompts were meant primarily to flesh out details or to elicit missing parts of their story. We might ask, for example: "How long had you been seeing your boyfriend at the time?" or "How did your mother react to your pregnancy?" or "How many periods had you missed when you went for a pregnancy test?" We did not raise questions about our subjects' personal values, religious beliefs, or political views on abortion until after their central narratives were complete.

We did remain sensitive to the difficulty our subjects often experienced in reliving their experiences. We often heard material the subject had never told anyone before. Frequently, subjects said they felt relieved to have a sympathetic ear, and, as a consequence, the interview itself triggered new insights for them and us. One subject, for example, was recalling a baby she had given up for adoption more than 20 years earlier. Not until she was preparing her thoughts for the interview, she told us, had she realized that there was a connection between her father's death that year and her decision to give birth, even though the baby's father had walked out. She had had a previous illegal abortion, she told us, and she could have found a way to obtain another. She had no moral convictions against the procedure. Only in retrospect did she see giving birth to that child as a way of filling a void.

Another woman, a victim of date rape seven years earlier, verbally stumbled each time her narrative neared the rape itself. Each time, we backed her away with a suggestion that she talk about another part of her story, until she was finally able to tell us all the details she had never before said aloud. We listened with sympathy as she began to realize that her current relationships with men, and even her manner of dress, reflected her unresolved feelings about that rape. At times our subjects and we wept with them. To distance ourselves from their emotionally wrenching stories, as conventional interview protocol might have demanded, would not only have made us appear inhumanly cold but probably would have yielded meager results. In return warmth and sympathy, these women gave us rare and precious material that had to be handled with care.

During the eight years that we gathered data (1983-1991), gathering stories of nearly 100 decisions, we sought participants who had made decisions under a wide variety of circumstances. As frequently happens to qualitative researchers, many participants were not “found” as much as they emerged from our investigative activities (Bogdan, et al., 1975); often one interview subject led us to another. A few, however, required great time and effort to uncover. We interviewed teenagers who had gotten pregnant at first intercourse and others who had had much sexual experience. We talked with women who were extremely careful about contraception and women who had used none at all. We talked to middle-aged women who had planned a pregnancy only to encounter a medical complication. We looked for pregnancy associated with traumatic factors such as drug addiction, prostitution, rape, or homelessness. We sought women who had made decisions as long ago as the 1930s and as recently as the 1990s. We tried to represent rich and poor, black and white, single and married, young and old. While about half of our subjects came from our own geographic area, and many were from middle-class urban and suburban neighborhoods, more than 20% were from impoverished backgrounds in semirural factory towns, remote hills, ghettoes, or the streets. We tried to balance birth and abortion decisions, although we make no claim that such a balance reflects actual decision making in the population. We know that one pregnancy in four ends in abortion, but there is no measurement of how many women consider abortion and decide against it.

We interviewed about 75% of our subjects in their own homes, and we did as many interviews as possible with both investigators present. In general, each interview lasted about one and a half hours, although a few went for as long as three hours.

In one sense, our subjects were a self-selecting group. Although some had been raped or had experienced birth control failures beyond their control, and others had planned their pregnancies only to be faced with a medical or genetic problem, most subjects (over 60%) became pregnant as a result of poor contraceptive practices. Therefore, while they may broadly represent women likely to face a birth-or-abortion decision, they do not necessarily represent American women. Women whose sexual conduct and contraceptive use consistently prevent unplanned pregnancy are necessarily under-represented in our work.

In addition to our primary participants, we interviewed 29 professionals who work closely with women making birth-or-abortion decisions. Our purpose was to seek their professional observations and compare them with our own. These professionals included: six physicians—including one psychiatrist and one medical ethicist—eight social workers, four psychologists, and several nurse practitioners, ethicists, authors, and counselors. A few such informants were also activists in the pro-life or pro-choice political battle.

When our research was complete, we pored through a two-foot pile of interview transcripts for patterns that linked the stories across their diversity of time and place, of ages and socio-economic class, of education and circumstance. Analysis of exploratory research data can rely primarily on an examination of interview transcripts "for patterns in which important concepts are linked in individual cases" (Dahnke, et al., 1990, p. 314). We had asked our transcribers to annotate any emotion they heard in the subjects' voices, and we frequently returned to the tapes ourselves to verify these notes. Our analysis, therefore, took into account the emotions our subjects showed and the times when they stammered or fell into silence.

From our analysis, two major themes emerged:

1. In telling the stories of their birth-or-abortion decisions, women did indeed use language that was absent from abortion debate. Our subjects' language was one that reflected a moral standard also absent from our public discussion of the issue.
2. In our sample, how well women coped after a birth or an abortion was more a function of their decision making than its outcome. Those who felt they had made their own choices, without being coerced or manipulated by other people or circumstances, experienced few unresolved emotions even when the decision itself was a painful one.

The first finding supports earlier work done by Carol Gilligan in which she had interviewed 29 women from pregnancy counseling services and abortion clinics in a large metropolitan area (Gilligan, 1982). In this and other research, Gilligan found that women used a moral standard different from the one that predominated among men, who had been the subject of most research on ethical decision making. Women, Gilligan determined, made moral choices differently. While men generally based their moral judgments on abstract principles of justice and rights, women worried more about relationships and responsibilities. "Women's construction of the moral problem, as a problem of care and responsibility in relationships," Gilligan wrote, "rather than as one of rights and rules ties the development of their moral thinking to changes in their understanding of responsibility and relationships, just as the conception of morality and justice ties development to the logic of equality and reciprocity" (1982, p. 73).

For the last 20 years, the abortion debate in this country has been shaped by the issues set forth in the 1973 U.S. Supreme Court decision *Roe vs. Wade* (Glendon, 1987; Tribe, 1990). Roughly speaking, the *Roe* decision granted women the right to privacy about abortion decisions up to the end of the second trimester when the fetus's viability might be sustained outside the womb. At that point the state could take measures to protect the developing life. Although *Roe* has been modified subsequently, its principles remain intact. And ever since, public debate has been a legalistic tug of war between women's rights and fetal rights and an abstract argument over whether human life begins at conception, at birth, or at some point between them.

However, the terms of this public debate bear little relationship to women's private decision making. Virtually none of interview subjects used the word "right." In the one exception—the case of a woman who decided to have a baby out of wedlock—the subject talked, not about a conviction that the fetus she carried had a "right" to life, but that she had the "right" to proceed with her pregnancy. Even in this exception, her use of the word "right" was an inversion of its use in the public debate.

Similarly, the issue of when life begins, while central to the public debate, was peripheral to the private decision makers we interviewed. Only a handful of women referred to this question in recounting the stories of their decisions. Even those women who had strong convictions about the beginning of life did not regard those beliefs as their sole deciding factor. Instead, the women saw the fetus they carried as a potential responsibility that they might or might not be able to meet. The women who, by Gilligan's measures, were the most morally immature women (but not necessarily the youngest) saw that responsibility purely in terms of whether it inhibited or enhanced their own needs. Many women we interviewed, however, were in the middle stages of Gilligan's hierarchy of moral development, and their consideration of motherhood was determined almost solely by the needs of others. "Goodness" became "equated with caring for others" (Gilligan, 1982, p. 74), including the potential child. For the women at the third and highest stage of Gilligan's hierarchy of moral development, concerns for others and for self were integrated and broadened to include a more global sense of responsibility.

For all women in our sample, no matter what stage of moral development they had achieved, the particular circumstances in which their pregnancy occurred affected their relationships and their ability to fulfill responsibilities. These circumstances were virtually always more crucial in determining the pregnancy's outcome than more abstract convictions about the morality of abortion.

Because most women define themselves within a web of human relationships, they see their individual actions causing vibrations through the web and affecting the lives of all others (Belenky, et al., 1986; Gilligan, 1982). If a woman believes that bearing a child would have a powerfully negative impact on herself and others, she may consider it more immoral to go ahead with a pregnancy than to abort it, even when she believes that abortion is murder. On the other hand, a pro-choice woman may find herself surprised by the sense of responsibility she feels for the potential life she carries, and she decide to go ahead with an unplanned pregnancy if her circumstances weigh in that direction.

Pro-choice and pro-life activists, who use the language of rights and justice almost exclusively in their public discussions, relish such "contradictions" as evidence of their enemy's hypocrisy. The pro-choice activists we interviewed—mostly counselors and medical personnel in abortion clinics—repeatedly told stories about clinic picketers who themselves had furtive abortions or who brought a pregnant daughter for an abortion. Pro-life advocates we talked to—mostly volunteer counselors and administrators in pro-life pregnancy counseling and service centers—told reverse tales of pro-choice women who could not bring themselves to abort after seeing photographs of fetal development. Seen through the lens of care and responsibility, however, neither "conversion" seems either remarkable or hypocritical. The circumstances that affect a woman's ability to care for a baby often override her conviction about the fetus's "right" to life or her own "right" to abortion, even though these abstract principles may seem important until she is faced with a personal decision. Then the reality of her responsibilities comes to the foreground, and the abstract principles of abortion as just or legal retreat to the background. Understandings of moral right and wrong become refocused.

Like Brown and Gilligan (1992), we wanted to try to understand points at which women faltered in their understanding and articulation of their views or experiences. In examining the interview transcripts and tapes, we found that women often stumbled at rough emotional points, as was true for the date rape victim described above. But women also paused, stuttered, or got confused when they feared that their thoughts and feelings betrayed their politics. They did not understand that their language and concerns were representative of private experience and had been muted by the dominant public discourse. As a result, they suffered the disharmony between the two, a phenomenon that has gone virtually unacknowledged and unexplored.

Anne Londino, for example, was a 21-year-old student when she had an illegal abortion in 1969. More than 20 years later, her moral judgments about her actions remained mixed. "Maybe that [abortion] experience will always be unresolved for me," she told us. "I think abortion is murder, and yet I know I made the right choice. I know that's inconsistent, but it's the best I can do. I wouldn't have loved that baby, but I couldn't have stood having it in the world without taking care of it," she said.

Anne's views on abortion remain "inconsistent" today. "I make contributions to pro-choice groups. I don't want anyone, ever, to go through what I went through.... All the same, there's still a very Catholic side of me that thinks abortion is murder." Such ambivalence, while confusing to Anne herself, resembles the mixture of feelings expressed by the majority of Americans, who tell pollsters they want legal abortion but hate the need for it. A reasoning person, like Anne, can find abortion unjust, applying the principles of justice and human rights. Yet as a compassionate woman, looking closely at particular circumstances with a sense of caring and responsibility, she can feel that it is sometimes permissible. Anne's thinking seems inconsistent to her because it fails to conform to the black-or-white debate on abortion. But that debate shuts out exactly the moral shadings brought forth when principles of caring temper those of justice. Oversimplification in the public debate causes people like Anne to regard the complexity of their own thinking as moral weakness. Instead it can be seen as moral strength and sophistication. Struggles by people like Anne, who refuse to lose sight of either justice or care considerations in the face of ethical dilemmas, may actually be the real measure of moral maturity for both men and women.

In the studies Gilligan conducted with Jane Attanucci (July 1988), the two found that about one-third of their male subjects and one-third of their female subjects strove for this balance in resolving moral dilemmas. Gender differences showed up only among the subjects who focused on one moral standard at the complete or partial expense of the other. In these cases, the women were more likely to overbalance toward caretaking, the men toward justice.

The second major finding emerging from our research—that the degree to which women coped successfully after a birth or an abortion was related more to their degree of control over their decision process than to its outcome—is somewhat more predictable. Some women we interviewed had abdicated personal responsibility for their birth-or-abortion decisions. Some had willingly given into the wishes of a parent, lover, or husband; others did so under tremendous pressure. Sacrificing one's own needs to those of others is more closely associated with women's ethical decision making than men's (Belenky, et al., 1986; Gilligan, 1982).

As one might expect, many women who did not control the process of deciding what to do about a pregnancy also had failed to control pregnancy risk as well. For some women, the notion of forthrightly expressing their needs, especially on matters of sexuality, seemed as odd as speaking a foreign language. We found, as Kristin Luker had observed 15 years earlier (Luker, 1975), that when women did not use contraceptives properly, they were sometimes risking pregnancy as an unconscious but rational way to obtain other goals. For many, pregnancy seemed only a remote possibility, while the romantic sexual moment was powerful and immediate. To prepare and plan for sex was to rob it of its spontaneity and passion. Besides, as Luker points out, pregnancy can have benefits. It can provide proof of womanhood and fertility, and it can test the relationship.

A number of women, looking back 5, 10, 20 or more years at their failure to contracept and to take charge of a subsequent birth-or-abortion decision, attributed their passivity at the time to a history of abuse, a dysfunctional homelife, or prevailing cultural expectations of women.

For example, when we first interviewed Beth Nichols about the abortion she had had at 26 in 1974, she relived it alarmingly, feeling anguish and rage that she had thought were long extinguished. At the time of the pregnancy, she had been working as a pediatric nurse and dating Todd, a general surgery resident, for nearly three years. She had recently gone off the pill and turned to the chancier use of foam, without the added protection of condoms, because Todd "did not like to use anything." She conceived during her first cycle after the switch.

"Todd hadn't made any commitment to marry me, although we were living together.... He did not want this pregnancy.... I didn't want to have to... say to myself that this person had married me only because I was pregnant." Beth had an abortion and talked to no one about the experience, sealing off her emotions

At the time we interviewed Beth, 12 years after the abortion, she and Todd had been married for 10 years. Beth had gone through years of infertility and miscarriages that eventually yielded two healthy children. Those ordeals and joys had raised the specter of her abortion, but it wasn't until she prepared herself for our interview that Beth began to reel under the impact of long-repressed emotions. "I wanted to destroy Todd last week," she told us as we interviewed her. "I hated him all over again. I hated myself all over again. He still believes we made the right decision under the circumstances." She did not.

A year or so after we first spoke with her, Beth began therapy, and she began deliberately to probe the pain that went far deeper than her anger with Todd or her sorrow over the abortion. "Both my parents were alcoholic," Beth explained. "My father died of cirrhosis when I was 15. My mother is still drinking at 73.... In our house, when I was little, someone was always striking somebody or screaming or isolating themselves."

Beth's need for a good parent drove her to find in Todd "a father I never had. When the abortion crisis came along, he failed me, and that was what was so devastating.... Our marriage only began to work when I began to separate Todd from my father. Then I could acknowledge that the abortion was my decision, too. It is probably not the one I would have made if I had known what I know now." Nevertheless, Beth had finally begun to take responsibility for her choice.

On such a controversial issue as abortion, it is dangerous to pull out one narrative to represent any part of the issue. We should point out, therefore, that many women exhibited similar regrets about their lack of control over birth decisions. Some had become poor mothers to children they had not desired; others felt they had been forced to relinquish a baby for adoption. While most mothers found it too difficult to say they wished they had not had a child they had come to love, many women deeply regretted and resented a coerced decision, whatever its outcome.

Other studies of abortion aftermath have used more traditional social science research methods to establish similar findings, although few have included the study of birth aftermaths when the choice of abortion was rejected or unattainable (See David, Dytrych, Matejcek, & Schuller, 1988). While most such studies have been used politically to support the importance of allowing women to choose abortion, our study added a dimension that has significance for public policy, as opposed to politics.

Just as significant to our findings as the women who felt coerced by other people were women who felt forced into a decision by circumstances. Not surprisingly, women who had made decisions before abortion was legal told us they felt they had little choice at the time of their decisions. What was surprising was the great number of women who felt they had little choice after *Roe vs. Wade*. Many of these younger women told us that, in a society that places such an emphasis on "choice," they felt that they had *no* choice but abortion—because they didn't want to be pregnant in the first place, because they had no health insurance (or job or education), because the man involved had deserted, because their employer would not grant them a leave, or because they could not afford child care or housing.

Nancy and Jim Shaler, for example, faced an unplanned pregnancy in 1985. Although they both had low incomes (Nancy was still in school), they decided to go ahead with the pregnancy—only to discover that they could not. As Nancy put it, "doors just kept closing." They had no health insurance that would cover pregnancy, no access to affordable child care. They had debts. With no way to afford to become parents, they reluctantly agreed to abort. They may have had the "right" to terminate their pregnancy, but they did not have any realistic hope of proceeding with it. They were victims of a national focus too fixed on *Roe vs. Wade* to see that abortion has become a policy of first resort in this country.

Mary Ann Glendon, Harvard professor of comparative law, has argued that Western Europe is doing a much better job of accomplishing what President Bill Clinton says is his goal for the United States— to make abortion safe, legal and *rare.* European and other democratic nations have managed both to make abortion available and to enact measures that help make it the woman's last resort rather than her first and seemingly only one. Europeans have done this less by restricting access to abortion than by promoting positive measures aimed at encouraging sexual responsibility and supporting women with unplanned but wanted pregnancies (Glendon, 1987).

The United States has both the highest rate of unplanned pregnancy and abortion of any Western democracy (five times that of the Netherlands, for example) (Jones, Forrest, Henshaw, Silverman, & Torres, 1988). Moreover, most experts in the decades preceding the 1973 *Roe vs. Wade* decision estimated that abortion was widely obtained by all variety of women in settings that ranged from dirty back alleys to clean hospital beds. And, although statistics about illegal abortions are hopelessly unreliable, most experts at the time also agreed that about one million pregnancies—or one pregnancy in four—was ending in abortion (1958; 1966; 1967; Bonavoglia, 1991; Davidson, 1963; Davis, 1944; Davis, 1985; Kaledin, 1984; Kerby, 1967;

Kinsey, & University, 1953; Lader, 1966; Lader, 1969; Messer, et al., 1988; Palmer, 1943; Shriver & Guttmacher, 1968; Sontheimer, 1955; Tribe, 1990; Ward, 1941). Today, after 20 years of legal abortion, abortion rates in the United States remain exactly the same. This nation's own history, along with that of other countries, clearly indicates that legality is not the key factor affecting abortion rates. For example, large numbers of women managed to abort in Romania during the recent reign of communist dictator Nicholae Ceausescu, even though he had completely outlawed the procedure. The result, as we have seen, was women and children damaged from botched attempts.

As a nation, the United States appears to be less morally mature than many of its private citizens in addressing the troubling matter of abortion. While individuals we talked to struggled for ways to respect and accommodate differences, to balance personal autonomy with regard for others, and to understand that both birth and abortion challenge the best that is in people, America's public disagreement has persisted in furious invective (Luker, 1984; Tribe, 1990). The only hope for replacing diatribe with genuine dialogue may lie in listening carefully to women and men who have struggled with real-life ambiguities and complexities—even people who have erred or overbalanced. Those who describe their private dilemmas speak in different terms than the debate; they apply a different standard. Few would say that justice is unimportant, most simply say that care counts, too. Theirs are the human faces that suddenly appear in that well-known optical illusion when the vision shifts from a dark vase to two pale human profiles facing one another.

Their voices and visages bring a recognition that there is another way to view the problem (Gilligan, July 1988).

Americans have failed to recognize the vast common ground they share on this issue. Few people—regardless of their position on abortion's legality—want to perpetuate America's high rates of unplanned pregnancy and abortion. Just about everyone wants both girls and boys to be raised with enough self esteem to allow them to act with sexual responsibility. Few are pleased to see unplanned but wanted pregnancies aborted because this nation has turned its back. Indeed, the United States may have become so focused on individual freedom and "choice" that it has turned the *right* to be let alone into an *excuse* for leaving others alone with their problems.

Most Americans have said in poll after poll for more than 30 years that they want to see abortion remain legal but also to become less necessary and less common. Thus, most citizens fail to find their feelings expressed in either of the two extreme positions that monopolize the public debate. The United States is the only Western democracy (with the possible exception of Ireland) to discuss lowering the abortion rate strictly in terms of blocking access. While Americans may never agree on either the justice or morality of abortion itself, the exclusive focus on legality, rights and access has allowed them to turn their backs on the concerns of women facing personal dilemmas.

Like most exploratory research, our findings raise more questions than they answer. We have added only a tiny piece to the puzzle of what women's voices may have to tell. More feminist scholars in communication and related fields need to seek answers to the real abortion dilemma: why it is so common. We need a greater understanding of why contraceptive use is so poor in this country. We need to explore ways to bring messages of sexual responsibility to our children and to mute the effect of the mass media's images of sexual irresponsibility without trampling the First Amendment. We need to study how effective sex education programs can integrate, rather than threaten, the community's values. We need to explore more carefully the relationship between abortion decisions and family policies that could encourage childbearing (such as affordable daycare, universal health care, family leave, dead-beat dad accountability, and affordable housing and job training for young and single parents).

Such exploration of women's voices could allow our public and private discussion of abortion to mesh. It could bring responsibility into our discussion of rights. It could allow mercy to soften the hard edges of justice. It could help us to stop pitting women and fetuses against one another. It could allow men and women to bring their private feelings about the moral and emotional complexity of the abortion issue into the public arena, where they might help to turn a bitter debate into a dialogue. While the activists may never find common ground, the rest of America might find it by listening to one another.

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The Scientific Management of Radio, 1919-1993:

The deskilling of personalities, programmers and women

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Abstract

Radio's industrialization influenced its hiring practices throughout the years and helped shape the role of women in radio. This paper examines managerial philosophies on control, productivity and efficiency which originated during the industrial age, and investigates their impact on radio. Desktop radio is a product of scientific management, and has deskilled the on-air personality and radio programmer as well as reduced decision-making opportunities for women in radio programming and their influence in American popular culture.

The Scientific Management of Radio, 1919-1993:

The deskilling of personalities, programmers and women

Radio executives historically have sought new methods of controlling programming because of the highly competitive nature of the industry. This desire to search for the one best way to control their employees and product is similar to the scientific management philosophies of the early 1900s (Taylor, 1919; Jenkins, 1973). Herbert Schiller (1970) suggested the birth of radio around the time of the industrial age significantly influenced modern-day electronic media's policies and practices. Radio's industrialization influenced its hiring practices throughout the years and helped shape the role of women in radio.

In this paper, I will explore managerial philosophies on control, productivity and efficiency which originated during the industrial age, and investigate their impact on radio. Desktop radio (more specifically as it relates to music computerization) is a product of scientific management, and has deskilled the on-air personality, programmer and perhaps the radio industry as well as reduced decision-making opportunities for women in radio programming and their influence in American popular culture.

This paper is organized in five sections (1) the quiet revolution of desktop radio, (2) scientific management principles in radio, (2) Theory X in radio, (3) extreme specialization and deskilling, (4) scientific management of women, and (5) implications for women in radio.

The Quite Revolution of Desktop Radio

> On a winter day a traveler tuning into a radio station in the Midwest might hear disc jockey Don McMasters warning about black ice on the local roads. At that identical moment, a listener to a station in the South might hear the same Don McMasters announcing the time. The ubiquitous McMasters, who is heard on nearly 100 radio stations from Singapore to Casper, Wyo,. is a manifestation of a quiet revolution in radio stations--a trend to automation and computerization (Sweeney, 1975, p. 394.)

As with many businesses, radio automation and computerization began two decades ago as a means to simplify time-consuming tasks such as billing and the daily logging of commercials. During the eighties, radio corporate groups and individual stations were bombarded with innovative programming technology, especially in the areas of audience research and music selection. Radio stations tested songs, classic and new, on selected audiences, just as manufacturers would test market a new brand of soap or soda. Songs titles were entered into the computer and music logs were printed out. Listener requests to some large stations were entered into computers by phone operators, bypassing the disc jockey completely.

Radio program managers, especially at large metropolitan stations, demand disc jockeys meticulously follow computer-generated music playlists, compiled from audience research data. On-air employees, except for the relatively few high profile personalities like Howard Stern and Casey Kasem, are evaluated on their ability to adhere to rigid programming policies. In essence, disc jockeys facilitate the flow of an assembly line of songs and factual tidbits prepared for mass consumption, with each spoken element allotted a certain number of seconds to maximize the effectiveness of on-air performance, and the more essential element music. Discussing the rewards and ramifications of radio computerization, Joan Sweeney (1975) said:

> Some critics complain automation turns programming into an assembly line process, like putting together a car at a GM plant. Proponents say it can mean better programming, especially on smaller stations (p. 395.)

In the nineties, in perhaps what should be referred to as the scientific management of radio, the industry is moving toward "desktop radio:"

> Now you can run your station, programmed from compact discs for your market, at a fraction of the cost of using yesterday's technology. You can be totally live, live-assist or fully automated, and you can mix these functions together to fit your needs. The genius of the computer controlled system is that it's all on line, all the time. Thus, there is no operator handling of the compact disc. Music that is thoroughly researched and tested all across America ("Advertisement," 1989.)

Long gone are the days of radio when the on-air personality commanded an influential role in programming, especially music. Joe Niagara (interview with Logan, 1989) of Nostalgic WPEN, one of the Top 40 Philadelphia superjocks from the fifties and sixties, reflected on the days when "promotional guys came into the studio [and] you almost auditioned a record as you played it the first time" (p. 1F). It was only a few years ago that most large market program directors were also disc jockeys, maintaining a daily shift at his/her radio station. Beginning in the eighties, many companies preferred "off-air" programmers. It is fairly common for management to program (and virtually control) every on-air element, including the length and exact content of a talk segment and the specific placement of a particular song (O'Donnell et al., 1989).

Scientific Management Principles in Radio

Susan J. Douglas (1991) said radio was neglected from its inception, with "little attention" given to its "twenty-year gestation period," especially by the press from 1915 to 1922:

> This ahistorical stance made radio seem an autonomous force, so grand, complex, and potentially unwieldy that only large corporations with their vast resources and experience in efficiency and management could possibly tame it (p. 190.)

Management's emphasis on control, productivity and efficiency during the industrial era laid the foundation for radio's development. Schiller stated radio was "one of the accompaniments of successful industrialization in Western Europe and the United States:"

> Corporate complexes (General Electric, Westinghouse, Radio Corporation of America, and American Telephone and Telegraph) struggled for monopolistic control of the broadcasting medium, while the public was considered first only as a consumer of equipment and later as a saleable audience (Schiller, 1970, p. 21.)[1]

Since its inception, the radio industry has measured its success in production units, originally determined by the number of radio sets sold and then by the number of commercials aired on a specific radio station. Born into industrialization early in the century, radio discovered its programming could be scientifically managed. From 1926 to 1933, a broadcasting pattern and structure was established that would last well into the nineties: these "developments were more than evolutionary; they were basic directional decisions [that] removed broadcasting from the role of experimental novelty and made it an industry" (Sterling & Kittross, 1990, p. 97).

Also from the beginning, music played a major role in radio. David Sarnoff referred to radio as the "music box," and by 1932 music comprised 64 percent of radio programming (Sterling & Kittross, 1990, pp. 120, 557). By 1939, radio researchers devised sophisticated audience measurement tools,

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[1] See also, Christopher H. Sterling, "Television and Radio Broadcasting," in Benjamin M. Compaine (Ed.), Who Owns The Media? Concentration of Ownership in the Mass Communications Industry (New York: 1979), pp. 61-126.

in an attempt to discover why certain shows, and eventually why some personalities, appealed to certain listeners. When the radio networks declined, they gave way to the "illusion" of local programming, in actuality which is comprised of "formulas, imitation and a limited number of national music program sources" (p. 97).[2] By the late fifties, programming was becoming "increasingly efficient at attracting and identifying specific audience segments...programming became at this point 'scientific' (O'Donnell et al., 1989, p. 77; Meeske, 1987).

The disc jockey's ability to make songs rise to the top of the charts or certain programs successful, once a mystery to management, was extensively researched. Merritt Roe Smith (1991) acknowledged that "knowing the secrets of a trade" empowered employees during the Industrial Revolution, providing them with some leverage in the workplace (p. 559). In the late seventies, when radio management discovered it was cost-effective to emphasize music over personality (without significant audience losses), disc jockeys became fairly expendable.[3] Computers and consultants could pick the "hits" without the aid of an experienced disc jockey.

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[2] In the thirties and forties, networks controlled radio programming for most of the nation. It was not until the Federal Communications Commission imposed new restrictions on network programming that locally originated programming was required of individual stations, in order to serve in the public interest in their respective communities.

[3] This new role of the radio personality affected women entering into the field during this time. The number of women announcers hired in radio increased in the seventies and eighties. In 1971, the FCC included women in its affirmative action programs of the broadcasting industry, after pressure from women's organizations. See Barbara Murray Eddings, "Women In Broadcasting (U.S.): De Jure, De Facto," Women's Studies International Quarterly 3 (1980): 1-13; also see Margaret Gallagher, Unequal Opportunities. The Case of Women and the Media (France: United Nations, 1981). Joan Rothschild's "From Sex to Gender in the History of Technology" discussed similar barriers to women in Stephen H. Cutcliffe and Robert C. Post (Eds.), In Context: History and the History of Technology (Bethlehem, Pa., 1988), p. 194.

As technology and research methods became available to radio executives, they standardized their operations to the point of extreme specialization. These practices were rooted in Frederick Taylor's scientific management principles of 1919:

> Perhaps the most prominent single element in modern scientific management is the task idea. The work of every workman is fully planned out by the management at least one day in advance, and each man receives in most cases complete written instructions, describing in detail the task which he is to accomplish, as well as the means to be used in doing the work (Taylor, 1919, p. 39.)

With the advent of desktop radio in the eighties, and like forms of music computerization beginning as early as the seventies, the exact placement of a song could be predetermined the day before by a local programmer and sometimes weeks ahead if the station subscribed to a music service. A music log was then printed out for the disc jockey to follow or displayed on a computer terminal in the on-air studio. After choosing from any number of software packages available through trade journals and consultant firms, program directors developed tightly controlled formats, which detailed what songs, commercials or talk elements were to be played minute by minute (McKinsey & Company, 1985). Joe Logan (1989), radio-television columnist and staff writer for the Philadelphia Inquirer said:

> Today radio stations from New York to Iowa City monitor the music that goes out on their airwaves closer than J. Edgar Hoover monitored the subversive activity. And they do it with market research and computers that help determine what you hear and when" (p. 1F.)

David Jenkins (1973) stated, "Under scientific management, there is nothing too small to become a subject of scientific investigation" (p. 28). In the mid eighties, the National Association of Broadcasters praised a radio program director for "excellence in programming," which consisted of a format so specific that disc jockeys were required to use "set phrases" when giving the temperature (McKinsey & Company, 1985, p. 36).

Theory X in Radio

Taylorism, or scientific management, calls for management to select, train and motivate employees in the "one best way" to perform the task (Robbins, 1987, p. 477)[4] At many radio stations, managers and corporate consultants design creative programming, and the disc jockeys simply follow outlined procedures. Douglas McGregor (1957) recognized that most managers believe employees are resistant to their goals, and these traditional perceptions are rooted in the management philosophies of the industrial era. As the era of the Boss Jocks came to a close by the late seventies, many stations hired consultants:[5]

> Because of their success, consultants are very powerful men. The four most influential--Abrams, Sebastian, Pollack, and Hamilton--directly control the sound of more than 120 rock stations. That's about a third of the stations that count--and that doesn't include the influence the consultants have had over others who listen to the consulted stations and imitate their playlists (Goldberg, 1987, p. 144.)

Disc jockeys are hired for their great voice and ability to adhere to the station's format. Overall the lack for respect, or reward, for individualism has lead metropolitan stations to hire disc jockeys who sound "surprisingly alike" (O'Donnell et al., 1989, p. 78; Gunther, 1987). In fact, the air personalities who now command six figure salaries were often fired several times for not conforming to station policies.

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[4] See also John E. Kelly, Scientific Management, Job Redesign and Work Performance (New York, 1982).

[5] See also Robert P. Snow in Creating Media Culture (Beverly Hills, CA, 1983); also Karrie Jacobs in "Watching A Radio Consultant Consult" in Alan Wells (Ed.), Mass Media and Society (Lexington, MA, 1987), pp. 135-139.

The industry-acclaimed concept of farm radio stations is perhaps the most startling example of McGregor's (1957) Theory X, in which employees are rewarded for their acceptance of managerial control. Radio corporate groups buy stations in small markets, training employees in a particular format or style. Stations serve as inexpensive laboratories, in which the overhead for talent and operating expenses are extremely low (Butler, 1989). In return, the company offers job security to its on-air employees and the opportunity to work in a larger market at a sister station in the broadcast chain. The philosophy behind farm stations originated in Taylorism, a scientific method of "inducing [and] training" employees (Taylor, 1919, p. 47).

Extreme Specialization and Deskilling

Scientific management policies that assume the employee is "only an instrument purchased by the employer for a certain task" (Jenkins, 1973, p. 24), as well as Theory X assumptions about employee motivation, seem pervasive in deskilling on-air personalities.

Desktop radio provides management complete control over every on-air element, ranging from the placement of a commercial, song or pre-programmed talk break. One system is called DigiTotal[6], designed for music management: complete with a song library of over 1100 songs and interactive capabilities with live disc jockeys. A similar but more sophisticated system called Desktop Radio, described earlier in this paper, programs and plays compact discs without any physical contact between the operator and music. Disc jockeys perform as facilitators, or operators, who are alienated from the programming. They are one element of an on-air strategy, preconceived by consultants, program directors and audience research.

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[6] DigiTotal and Desktop Radio are brand names for new computer systems advertised in trade magazines such as Radio & Records and Radio Today.

This is a fundamental tenet of Taylorism: "The planning of the work needs to be separated from its actual execution" (Jenkins, 1973, p. 31). Perhaps it is this separation of planning and execution that has deskilled the disc jockey. The effect of this "brains/hands dichotomy" is management becomes the "depository of all knowledge about the work process, capable of determining in minute detail the tasks to be carried out" (Congress of the United States, 1987, p. 17). At many stations, disc jockeys rarely plan out their songs, and on the sophisticated systems they do not even handle the compact discs. The phrase "on-air personality" has been popularized, in lieu of the passe "disc jockey," yet any semblance to personality might be attributed to programmed liners--prepared statements of station activities read (often verbatim) over the air. Computerized logs detail the exact time each element will be performed, whether it is a song, commercial or talk break. On-air elements are screened by a multitude of specialists (consultants, researchers, promotions directors and sales managers) who provide feedback to the program director who subsequently feeds this data into a computer.

If management possesses all the information, the employees might find it difficult, if not impossible, to assess their role in the total operation. Harry Braverman (1974) noted division of labor cheapens the bargaining power of labor. Andrew Zimbalist (1979) stated deskilling minimizes personal talent and craft skills to the point that the employee is "more easily and cheaply substituted for in the production process (pp. 15-16). Radio farms or laboratories train and maintain employees that, at considerable cost reduction, can be plugged into other radio stations within the corporate chain. A handful of on-air personalities such as Shadoe Stevens, Rick Dees and Scott Shannon command high salaries, while the majority of major market disc jockeys earn $20,000 to 35,000 annually after several years experience. Research has indicated that listeners are loyal to stations, not announcers. Indeed, in some instances, "great morning talent" are replaceable without much loss to the station's audience or revenue" (Parikhal, 1989, p. 24).[7] Moreover, the fragmentation of radio formats has further splintered the industry.

Braverman (1974) credited Charles Babbage for recognizing the cost efficiency of division of labor and, its eventual result, deskilling. Specialization was introduced to management as a means to control the production process. The social consequences of deskilling were discussed by Braverman:

> Insofar as the labor process may be dissociated, it may be separated into elements some of which are simpler than others and each of which is simpler than the whole. Translated into market terms, this means that the labor power capable of performing the process may be purchased more cheaply as dissociated elements than as a capacity integrated in a single worker. Applied first to handicrafts and then to mechanical crafts, Babbage's principle eventually becomes the underlying force governing all forms of work in a capitalist society, no matter in what setting or at what hierarchical level (pp. 81-82.)

The radio industry has reaped profits from this principle for years. As programming computerization absorbed many of the disc jockey's duties, management felt justified to maintain low salaries. In a small to medium market, a salary of three hundred dollars weekly is usually "considered relatively high" (O'Donnell et al., 1989, p. 318). The profits, though, for the industry can be high, with advertisers spending several billion dollars annually, and major corporations spending tens of millions. In the middle to late eighties, many stations doubled their selling price (eg., Meeske, 1987), while the cost of computerization or automation decreased several thousand dollars (O'Donnell et al., 1989).

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[7] See also "Radio's New Wakeup Call," Radio & Records, December 15, 1989, p. 24.

It is difficult for disc jockeys to command high salaries if their importance to the entire operation is considered relatively insignificant by their managers. With the rise of "less talk, more music" formats, the role of the disc jockey is often reduced to a few minutes or seconds of predetermined chatter. The computer, quite proficient at generating music playlists reflective of listener likes and lifestyles, fills the airwaves with long sweeps of music. Even morning shows have increased their emphasis on music, and in many cases:

> Top PDs who are demanding more cuts per hour are doing so to force their morning hosts to 'edit' their bits...Just like baseball players who reach certain statistical goals (hits, home runs) for more money, stations will be building contracts that pay bonuses to morning hosts who squeeze in more tunes (Butler, 1989, p. 13).

Scientific Management of Women

The role of women in radio has been rarely discussed in the literature, although women comprise over one-half of a station's audience in the most popular formats (RAB, 1992; Stark, 1991c). The impact of radio on women, Anne Karpf (1980) criticized, has been especially ignored:

> While virtually all of the mass-media have come under feminist scrutiny in the past few years, radio has got off scot-free... radio, the medium which permeates women's lives more than any other, has been largely ignored (p. 41.)

Research on the status of women working in radio has been fairly neglected as well, although there have been a few significant studies. One radio network study indicated only 12 percent of managerial positions were filled by females (Stilson, 1987). A 1989 study conducted by the University of Missouri-Columbia School of Journalism indicated that women represent only 8% of the radio vice presidents and presidents in the industry, and earn salaries 19 percent lower than their male counterparts (Stark, 1991a). According to the Radio Advertising Bureau, women comprise 50 percent of the sales staff , and 25 percent of women in radio sales are department managers (1991c). Doug Halonen (1992) reported in "Electronic Media" that a congressional study indicated women-owned radio stations were 20 percent more likely to air women's programs than male-owned stations and 30 percent more likely than non-minority owned stations. In a decision written by Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas, the Court of Appeals in Washington ruled in 1992 against the Federal Communications Commission's policy of granting women preference for new broadcast licenses. Chief Judge Abner Mikva, in a dissenting opinion, said the study "explicitly concluded that there is a link between female ownership and program diversity" (Halonen, 1992, p. 4). Susan B. Anthony recognized the importance of female ownership in the mass media as early as 1889:

> Just as long as newspapers and magazines are controlled by men...women's ideas and deepest convictions will never get before the public (cited in Gallagher, 1987, p. 11.)

With less opportunities now for female ownership, and with women personalities and programmers still far outnumbered by men, programming decisions by women in radio will remain limited. Phyllis Stark (1991c) said, "In addition to few female PDs (program directors)--only two among the major-market stations reporting to Billboard's 100 Singles chart--women continue to be the minority among air talent." WAZU Program Director Lisa Lyons in Dayton, Ohio referred to this as the "unspoken quota":

> A lot of people feel like the listeners would prefer to listen to a male jock, but they want to have those one or two females to add some spice...I've heard it over and over again from PDs, GMs, consultants who are worried about putting two women back to back or together as a team (p. 80.)

During a 1991 national radio conference, a spokeswoman for Columbia Records asked male programmers why there are so few women program directors when in fact female listeners are the target audience of many formats (Stark, 1991c).[8] There is no conclusive evidence that female listeners prefer male announcers over female announcers. As early as the forties, female listeners were interested in the woman's viewpoint, as articulated by female announcers. Especially during World War II, female personalities won over the hearts and minds of their women audiences and created a bond between them. Yet trade journals and books on popular culture and communications rarely make reference to female radio personalities in broadcasting history (and if they do these women are allotted no more than a paragraph or a page), even to WDIA's Martha Jean "The Queen" Steinberg who was one of the first rhythm and blues deejays in the nation. Steinberg transformed a Memphis homemaker's show into a "hot-cookin' music fest" on the first African-American-formatted station in the country (Smith, 1989, p. 23). The early personalities were actresses, beauty pageant winners, child stars, or sometimes the wife or daughter of a well-known announcer (1989). During this time, these women were important role models to their female listeners.

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[8] Don Edwards [speech excerpt in "One Educator's View of Women Surging Into Broadcasting," Media Report To Women 19 (4-6) & 20 (1), (Winter 1991/1992)] stated, in the case of television, audience research does not indicate a viewer preference for male reporters over female news announcers.

Although women assumed lead roles in the daytime radio soaps, organizations like The Federation of Women's Clubs and fairly educated women in general criticized dramatic programming for its lack of relevance to their life (MacDonald, 1979). Communication research (eg., Lazarsfeld & Dinerman, 1979) as early as the forties indicated that listeners were more likely to be female, and often housewives who preferred soft music, informative tidbits, and enjoyed listening to female hosts over dramatic programming (p. 104):

> My favorite daytime show is Mary Margaret McBride... I like it as a way of keeping up-to-date with various people of note.
>
> I like Kate Smith. She talks about current happenings and news... [She] keeps you in touch with present day things.
>
> More [people I know] like Bessie Beatty and Mary Margaret McBride. They tell of people of interest doing important things. They have an inspirational effect on housewives.

Aside from the actresses and singers featured on radio in the thirties and forties, interviewers such as Mary Margaret McBride, Nellie Revell and Jane Cowl hosted their own shows, while other females also "too often ...forgotten" included news broadcasters like Pauline Fredericks, Sigrid Schultz, Wendy Warren, Martha Rountree and Brenda Adams (Poteet, 1975).

However, because only one-eighth of radio time was devoted to news/talk programming, many female listeners indicated dissatisfaction with the overall genre of music and dramatic programming: "Too much crying and noise"; "A lot of excitable women"; "I don't like the voice of the characters" (Lazarsfeld & Dinerman, 1979, p. 100). Other women complained that daytime serials were "designed for people of low intelligence"; and "They're all so much alike in plot" (1979, p. 101).

Researchers, at this time, suggested women were limited intellectually and psychologically, only capable of attending to simplistic programming. Paul F. Lazarsfeld and Helen Dinerman (1979) concluded many female radio listeners were more likely to experience "psychological difficulties [when] listening at the same time as they [did] their housework:"

> It has long been considered a desirable characteristic of radio that it does not always require the complete and undivided attention of its listeners...It now appears, however, that a good many women cannot participate in simultaneous activities, or find such participation unpleasant (pp. 90-91.)[9]

Over the next few decades, programming philosophies, designed and implemented by men for the most part, advocated female listeners preferred strong male voices during middays even though females were traditionally heavier users of the medium during the day (Stark, 1991c; Gallagher, 1981; Karpf, 1980). In the Philadelphia area, a survey of local radio stations reported females were heard in only 13 percent of the radio advertisements and public service announcements (Kaplan, 1978). In the nineties, the opportunities for female voice talent, although somewhat on the rise, have not significantly improved (Stark, 1991b).

As women entered the radio industry, they were more likely to assume evening or overnight on-air positions than their male counterparts.

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[9] Also, Lazarsfeld and Dinerman referred to this as the "one track-mind" phenomena, afflicting only females. Yet, historically, most housewives were conditioned to complete several task simultaneously, from child-care to cooking to cleaning. See Judith McGraw, "No Passive Victims, No Separate Spheres: A Feminist Perspective on Technology's History" in Stephen H. Cutcliffe and Robert C. Post (Eds.), In Context: History and the History of Technology (Bethlehem, Pa., 1988), p. 181.

Women and minorities, in general, were under-represented on the air and in the industry (Karpf, 1980). Donna L. Halper (1991) said the "deeply ingrained attitudes" against minorities within the radio industry also "kept women off the air by and large until the seventies" (p. 23). Jan Loft (1992), in her study of women in Minnesota radio[10], found almost 64 percent of the radio station respondents hired their first woman in the year 1978, with approximately 60 percent of them hired as full-time or part-time air personalities.[11]

Even though women were fairly successful in the early days of radio, programmers remained highly critical of female radio announcers. Bob Paiva (1983) explicated the industry's view of women:

> Although there have been some successful women air personalities, I know of no case which can be documented to prove that a station gained appreciable audience because it had a woman on the air nor lost any appreciable audience when the woman was replaced by a man. Given the success of so many male radio performers...the reverse cannot be said to be true. This does not predict a negative pattern for women in broadcasting. What it does say is that women have yet to find their particular identity on the air. The role model in radio for a long time was exclusively male. Many female air personalities initially adopted the delivery and style which had become identified with the male broadcaster. The potential for women will be reached when the stereotype is broken and the unique quality women bring to the air can be developed (pp.10-11.)

Without on-air experience, women were unlikely to advance to programming positions, especially in the seventies. Those women who rose to managerial positions were rewarded with longer hours and less pay than their male counterparts (Butler & Paisley, 1980). This was at a time when women struggled to be represented on panels at national media conferences, and annual reports indicated a dearth of women at the corporate level in broadcasting (Eddings, 1980). Comments from broadcast executives, for example, included:

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[10] Jan Loft, "A Descriptive Study of Contemporary Women in Minnesota Radio," presented at the National Association of Broadcasters, in the Gender Issues Division, April 1992. The results of the Minnesota study were overall more progressive than previous studies conducted nationally.

[11] Jan Loft also discovered that women, a decade later, were more likely to find managerial status in radio sales or operations than in radio programming.

> "Great actresses and newswomen have emerged. Just enough to serve as carrots to the generation of idealistic young women who follow";
>
> "I feel...there is still an atmosphere of discrimination against women in the media from men who see them getting in easier than they did" (1989, p. 2.)

Implications for Women in Radio

While some might argue research and computerization are tools of the broadcasters, freeing them from the tedious task of selecting music and planning their next on-air break (eg., Sklar, 1984), the disc jockey, no matter, has been deskilled in the process. In the seventies and eighties, women disc jockeys entering into broadcasting competed with already established male radio personalities and programmers and against the deeply embedded principles of scientific management. In Hamden, Connecticut, WOMN became first station to broadcast a non-sexist musical format for women, but it soon switched to a mass-appeal satellite programming: "As feminist singer Holly Near gave way to Elvis and Kenny Rogers, ratings shot up" (Gunther, 1987, p. 151).

In the mid seventies, women researchers were recognized for helping advance technology studies (Rothschild, 1988), and many females entered the radio industry during this time when one in seven stations were automated across the nation (Sweeney, 1975). Some managers said "radio suffered from a lack of on-air talent," and network and other nonlocalized programming would provide cost-effective quality shows (1975, p. 394).

In the early eighties, women on-air personalities moved into assistant programming positions (eg., music director), but by then, the computer did most of the work. This trend is similar to Joan Rothschild's (1988) discussion on deskilling in the telecommunications field:

> As jobs were deskilled in telecommunications...women moved into new jobs thus created, only to find these jobs eliminated in new rounds of automation. The more sophisticated technical jobs that were created tended to be filled by men (p. 196.)

Earlier generations of women typists entered clerical occupations when the threat of challenging or "replacing" men was minimal (1988, p. 198). Now that disc jockeys have assumed more clerical responsibilities and local programming remains driven by the policies of networks and corporate chains, more women have been promoted to on-air positions and managerial status, but not necessarily at the most popular stations and often at totally automated facilities.[12]

Managerial policies founded in scientific management and new technology (to aid in control and efficiency) may eventually eliminate the disc jockey on the radio, and further de-emphasize the role of women as radio programmers and personalities. Many women entered into the radio workforce in the seventies at approximately the same time as radio automation and computerization arrived. Beginning in the eighties, as the industry became more dependent on research, consultants became the key decision-makers, not the programmers. Decisions by station managers were dictated by corporate policy and designed and implemented by a "white male" hierarchial structure (Gans, 1978, p. 60; Ziegler & White, 1990, p. 216). The nineties programmer is proficient in computer and organizational skills. Formatting decisions are made by those in power now--the consultant and the corporate vice presidents of programming. As women slowly advance into programming positions, consultants hired increasingly by corporations dictate many of the programming strategies--once under the exclusive reign of the program director.

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[12] Radio & Records (1992), the leading radio trade magazines, lists the names of key programmers in the nation, most of which are men while an increasing number of women are listed as music directors or assistant program directors--jobs which primarily involve the generation of a computerized daily music log and other clerical tasks.

During the nineties, satellite radio programming will be aired in most small markets, reducing the need for local air personalities (except for mornings) (Kojan, 1990). Furthermore, while some radio stations are actively recruiting females for local programming positions, women morning personalities (6am to 10am) are still rarely heard on commercial radio, unless they are a "sidekick" to a morning team. Indeed, try to think of one nationally known female deejay on-the-air? Even nationally recognized female talk show hosts are few.

The problem with most research in mass media is that it ignores the wants and needs of female audiences. Virginia Nightingale (1990, p. 27) said:

> Strategies are based not on knowledge of actual women as audiences, but on beliefs and hopes about how to get women to watch television. Beliefs and hopes based on ratings research. Beliefs and hopes tied, apparently, to a cult of male personality.[13]

These "beliefs" about female audiences prevail in the radio industry, too.

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[13] Also see Robert O. Wyatt and David P. Badger (1991) in "Free Expression and the American Public: A Survey Commemorating the 200th Anniversary of the First Amendment," published by the American Society of Newspaper Editors and the Chair of Excellence in First Amendment Studies, Middle Tennessee State University.

Research would be best directed at studying women in general. For instance, communication between women has been explored in feminist literature. Barbara Bate (1988) indicated that women are "less guarded," more personal and interactive with each other than males (p. 306). Stark (1991b) said, "Besides the difficulty of breaking through in a male-dominated field, females voice talent must tackle the long-held belief that women don't want to hear other women" (p. 10). However, radio, listened to in 99 percent of all households, has been described as the "companion" medium (eg., Meeske, 1987; Gunther, 1987). Broadcasters become the "opinion leaders," "role models," and perhaps "an intimate friend in the mind of the listener:"

> [T]here is little reason to doubt that radio communications can provide some of the same benefits found in face-to-face relations. In itself, this is a major point in the media culture of contemporary urban society (Snow, 1983, p. 120.)

Conclusion

In this paper, the term on-air personality, a popular term in today's radio lingo, was used sparingly because it implies individualism and creative control. In the quest for the perfect formula, the disc jockey has become alienated from programming, the program director has become entrenched in research, and radio stations sound less unique than ever before. With research deciding every element of a radio station's on-air sound, the disc jockey as a one-to-one communicator is fairly passe and plays a secondary role to the computer.

Women, who could serve as role models for their female audiences, are fairly invisible and much less influential than men in the radio industry. As women rise to local programming positions, many of the most influential decisions affecting a station and its listeners are often delegated to consultants and research firms, and then implemented through corporate policies and computers. Concurrently, national (and international) programming and research opportunities are increasing. Consultant Larry Bruce said the nineties programmer will be "challenged to achieve a very high level of expertise" (Kojan, 1990, p. 53). National music cable systems now compete against radio stations and permit subscribers to program their own mix of music; perhaps computers and consumers will decide the fate of consultants in the years to come.

Approximately 75 years since the inception of scientific management in the industrial era, these principles still thrive in the radio industry. Joan Sweeney (1975) stated, "The capability exists for stations to operate without a human being on the premises...but the Federal Communications Commission does not permit it" (p. 394). Perhaps in the nineties, it might be just as appropriate to substitute the phrase "human being" for "woman" in the above sentence. The solution might be as obvious as recognizing the problem (de Camargo, 1987):

> [D]iscrimination against women is not simply a matter of law, earnings and poor working conditions. It is a deeply rooted cultural pattern which affects every aspect of women's being. It is not, therefore, something which any single set of measures will change. What is needed is a comprehensive and fundamental effort to free women from the ideological straitjacket in which they are held. As a group, women are the main target of proponents of the dominant ideology. Ironically, this is perpetuated by women themselves, who are 'the transmitters of ideas and values'--a conservative force in society. Deeply implicated in the propagation of existing beliefs and attitudes are the main agents of socialization: the family (where girls learn to serve the 'men of the house'); the education system (where concepts of 'femininity' and 'masculinity' are transmitted to children through textbooks, and are later reinforced by encouraging girls and boys to study different subjects); and of course the mass media (whose contents reflect and perpetuate the differences in treatment, value

and status which women and men are allotted in society) (p. 61.)

Interestingly enough, in the above passage Nelly de Camargo was discussing the problems of women management and decision-makers in Ecuador radio, but they are equally relevant to American mass media. Women, as listeners and professional communicators, must work together to overcome the male-dominated principles and philosophies still imbedded in our communication channels, whether these channels are interpersonal or technological in nature.

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CHECKBOOK JOURNALISM IN THE ELECTRONIC MEDIA: ALIVE AND FLOURSHING

By

Mike Meeske and Fred Fedler

A paper presented to the Radio-Television Journalism Division at the national convention of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication held August 11-14, 1993, in Kansas City, Missouri.

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Checkbook journalism, the controversial practice of paying sources for their exclusive stories, has become a common journalistic custom. Fedler's study of checkbook journalism in the 1970s found that the practice had grown in popularity, and Fedler warned that it would become even more common in the 1980s.[1] That seems to be the case, as checkbook journalism appears to have grown in the 1980s and beyond. A major problem with checkbook journalism, as Stein warned in 1972, is that standards for deciding what gets published and what does not have been changing under the mounting competitive pressure for our attention. Stein warned that since the changes in journalistic standards have been unconscious, they are all the more dangerous.[2] A 1980 survey of news consumer attitudes toward investigative reporting reflects the divergence of opinion about buying news. Forty-six percent of the respondents disapproved very much or somewhat of paying people money for information or interviews, but 45 percent said they approved very much or somewhat of buying news.[3]

Even newspaper staffers have varying opinions about buying news. Meyer, in a 1983 survey of editors, publishers and staff members, asked respondents what they would do if a former city employee living in another state asked for money to provide evidence of a kickback scheme by the mayor and half of the city council. Fifty-three percent said they would pay nothing, 33 percent said they would pay out-of-pocket expenses, 8 percent said they would put the informant on the payroll for time spent gathering and documenting facts, plus pay expenses, and 6 percent said they would pay an honorarium based on the news value of the story.[4]

As Sanders argues, paying a source may not be inherently wrong in all cases, but may only be the most blatant example of the "deals" reporters regularly make with sources.[5] Paying sources may be a practice the public, and editors, have come to accept.

The unconscious acceptance of checkbook journalism seems to be particularly great in the case of TV. Newsweek in 1975 said the practice of paying newsmakers "is anything but moribund in television."[6] The competition between television, cable and other media for their audiences has put immense pressure on every TV producer to go further than his other competitors, to give their audiences exclusively what they have not read or seen or heard before. The result is that both television news staffers and program executives have engaged in spirited bidding for the exclusive rights to items that can be used on TV.

Surprisingly, little direct attention has been focused on the issue of checkbook journalism and television. It is no secret that television has been willing to pay sources, but since the term "checkbook journalism" has been applied to several different practices--everything from paying a shady underworld figure for inside information to buying the publication rights for excerpts from a movie star's biography--the question is precisely how does the television industry engage in the practice? The goal of this paper is to categorize the types of checkbook journalism found in television, and illustrate the categories with examples.

An analysis of stories about television and checkbook journalism indicates that complaints against television involve both news and entertainment programming. Since there are no rules or guidelines for analyzing checkbook journalism, this paper will apply the practice to include both areas of concern.

TELEVISION NEWS

One of the initial characteristics of television is the tendency to blur the distinction between television news *per se* and television news programming. Television networks often air video interviews within the context of existing programs such as *60 Minutes*. These interviews have generated controversy at all three major networks, and have been defended as being "electronic memoirs."

Electronic Memoirs

CBS was embroiled in controversy in 1975 after airing a series of news specials that were defended as being memoirs, but were criticized for covering current news. CBS aired three interviews: one with exiled Soviet author Alexandr I. Solzenitsyn, another with convicted Watergate conspirator G. Gordon Liddy (reportedly paid $15,000), and a final interview conducted by the network's news division, reportedly for between $25,000 and $100,000, with former

Nixon chief of staff H.R. Haldeman. Mike Wallace conducted the Haldeman interview, and it appeared on two segments of 60 Minutes.

CBS argued that all three programs constituted personal reminiscences rather than paid journalistic exclusives. Buying a memoir, CBS argued, is different from paying for a breaking news story.[7] Earlier, CBS had run special interviews with former Presidents Eisenhower and Johnson which, though paid for, were accepted as memoirs. However, the 1975 interviews seemed to involve current newsmakers, which introduced the threat of allowing public figures to sell their stories to the highest bidder. New York Times columnist James Reston warned that the practice would handicap smaller stations. "CBS," he maintained, "is now introducing the unequal principle that news belongs to the outfit with the biggest bankroll."[8] However, Bill Leonard, former head of CBS News, defended the practice of paying for electronic memoirs. He argued that figures who supply their memoirs spend a lot of time in preparation and deserve to be paid.[9]

When Richard Nixon left the White House, both CBS and ABC declined to bid for the exclusive television rights to his memoirs. NBC reportedly bid $300,000 but broke off negotiations when Nixon's agent demanded more than twice as much. Eventually, former talk show host David Frost put together an independent production company which paid Nixon about $1 million for four 90-minute interviews that were broadcast on a special network of 155 television stations.[10]

In 1984, CBS aired a videotaped interview with Nixon. In this instance, CBS paid $500,000 for 90 minutes of videotaped interviews with Nixon and one-time Nixon aide Frank Gannon. The Nixon interviews were turned down by NBC on the grounds that the content wasn't sufficiently new, and by ABC, which objected to the use of Gannon as the interviewer since he had helped Nixon write his memoirs.[11] However, Columbia Journalism Review found it hard to see how the arrangement was different from a newspaper or magazine running excerpts of books.[12] Further, CBS argued that it maintained editorial control of the interview, since it selected 90 minutes of material out of a total of 38 hours of questions and answers.

It is not just the networks that pay for interviews. In 1975 two public television stations, WNET in New York and KQED in San Francisco, aired an interview with Abbie Hoffman, the former Yippie leader who jumped bail on a narcotics charge and remained a fugitive. The stations acknowledged that they paid $3,000 for the interview, but other questions were raised. One was the propriety of interviewing a fugitive who had been charged with a crime. In evaluating this concern, the Columbia Journalism Review concluded that:

> What fugitives have to say may be as newsworthy as what nonfugitives have to say; the crucial point to remember is that publicity and endorsement are two different things.[13]

The other concern with the interview was the fact that Hoffman demanded, and was given, the right to review the video tapes and order that sections be deleted. This raises the question of whether journalists surrender control of their products, an issue also raised when NBC hired expert consultants.

Adviser-Consultants

NBC is the network most vividly associated with hiring prominent individuals to develop and appear in news specials. In the late 1970s, NBC signed both Gerald Ford and Henry Kissinger to multi-year contracts shortly after they left office. In this case they were not to prepare memoirs, but to consult on current political developments. Kissinger was paid $1 million to appear in news specials and to do interviews for the Today show and NBC Nightly News. Ford and his family were paid $1.5 million to perform similar services for NBC.

The major complaint with these arrangements was that both Kissinger and Ford reserved their right to avoid certain subjects, or to perform their services in certain restricted ways. Kissinger completed one special, a 90-minute essay on his views of Eurocommunism, which Kissinger was said to have controlled. In addition, NBC was criticized for failing to acknowledge that it was paying Kissinger, and for its failure to ask about his policies or conduct during his years in office. Columbia Journalism Review concluded that NBC may have thought it would be rude and imprudent to discomfit Kissinger after paying a great deal for his services as a star.[14]

NBC wanted Ford to cover his first 30 days in office, but Ford and his book publisher retained control over what could and could not be discussed. By eliminating the first 30 days of Ford's presidency, they eliminated Richard Nixon and the Nixon pardon as topics.[15]

Overall, the practice of hiring experts, and then treating them with kid gloves, raises questions of fairness and candor. Just as Abbie Hoffman was allowed to veto some segments of his interview, giving expert consultants editorial control reinforces the notion that news belongs to the newsmakers, and not to news consumers, and opens the way to other demands by newsmakers. At a minimum, the public should be informed about which subjects are deleted by the newsmakers, but that was not done in the Hoffman interview, the Kissinger program or the Ford material.

Amateur Videos

The practice of buying amateur videos of news events is another instance of checkbook journalism in TV news. This practice was rare until the advent of home video cameras. Now, anyone in the right circumstances can record a newsworthy event.

There has been little controversy over this form of checkbook journalism, since stations simply seek out private individuals who happen to have video of a news event. Usually stations pay cash--from $25 to $200, plus on-air credit--to use the video. Since paying for news is usually defended as increasing the public's right to know, it can well be argued that paying for amateur videos permits a station to show an event when the station would otherwise not have had video.

Several prominent examples of amateur videos exist. It was an amateur videographer who captured the San Francisco earthquake scene where a motorist unknowingly drove through a hole in the damaged Oakland Bay Bridge. It was a sailor with a home video camera who photographed the explosion on the battleship Iowa, and it was a plumber, George Holliday, who taped the beating of Rodney King in Los Angeles.

The King video demonstrated the practical problems of using amateur video on-the-air. The photographer, George Holliday, first sold the video to Los Angeles station KTLA for $500, but later sought $10,000 from each of about 900 stations, networks and syndicated services that used or planned to use the controversial video. The problem is twofold: first getting proper clearance to use the video; second the contractual arrangements between stations, networks and syndicators for sharing a tape. The latter was the problem with the Holliday tape, since many stations received the tape from their affiliated networks and showed it without paying for it.[16]

Another concern with amateur video is that stations may receive bogus video, and using it on the air may damage journalistic integrity. This happened when both ABC News and CBS News ran an amateur video supposedly showing the Chernobyl nuclear power plant in the early hours of meltdown. However, an alert viewer recognized the scene as a cement plant fire in Italy. As a result, a young Frenchman was charged with fraud by Italian police. In another incident, KCNC-TV in Denver agreed to use a video of a pit-bull fight, only to get in trouble when it was discovered that reporter Wendy Bergen had staged the fight and had two of the station's photographers tape it. All three employees were fired, and Bergen went to court on felony charges.[17]

Video News Releases

A fairly recent example of checkbook journalism takes a different twist than using amateur video. It is the practice of creating news through the use of video news releases or electronic press conferences. With video news releases and video press conferences, electronic journalists do not pay for the video material per se but accept attractive programming content in hopes that the material will attract viewers and increase advertising revenues. Thus, stations receive indirect payment for using such video.

Purveyors of video releases liken their product to a press release. They don't pay stations or networks to run the releases, but capitalize on the insatiable demand of TV news for video material. Sponsors pay thousands of dollars for the releases, and their resources usually exceed those of local news operations. A 1989 Nielsen study found that 83 percent of local TV stations used video releases.[18]

The concern with video news releases is that they seek to create news. Critics have long argued that stations will run "picture rich" video at the expense of more crucial, but less visual, stories. Thus, a fluffy video news release may drive out a serious story on the economy.[19] The producers of video news releases create news by producing slick, sexy video about items the station otherwise might not cover, items that have the best interests of their sponsors at heart. The public has no way of knowing that these items were included in a newscast because they were expedient, especially since the Nielsen study revealed that fewer than half of the news directors polled said it was their policy to identify the footage as third party.[20]

A variation of the video news release is a practice by which presidential candidates have begun to get increased air time in important cities. Rather than staging photo opportunities and seeking out TV reporters, candidates stay in one place and buy time on a satellite, offering to do interviews with local anchors. President Bush, Governor Bill Clinton, and Ross Perot all used the technique during the 1992 campaign.

From the candidate's viewpoint, there are several advantages. First, it's easier for a presidential candidate to get a local station than a network to conduct an interview. Local anchors don't ask tough questions, and stations will often air the entire interview. A second advantage is that viewers are more likely to believe a news interview (or in the case of a video news release, a news segment) than a paid commercial. Further, a video news segment or interview costs less than a commercial. [21]

Nevertheless, the political interviews are tainted, since it is the candidates, not the station, who pay for the interview. A brief disclaimer announcing that the candidate paid for the interview may not be noticed by viewers.

Tabloid News

Perhaps the most obvious examples of buying news are exhibited by the tabloid TV shows. These shows actively bid for information from people who are involved in current news. The William Kennedy Smith rape trial presented examples of the bidding wars. Patricia Bowman, the rape victim, said she was offered a half million dollars by Hard Copy but refused the offer. However, Anne Mercer, a witness for the state, admitted she accepted $40,000 to appear twice on A Current Affair.[22]

In another Florida story, controversial attorney Ellis Rubin was accused of trying to get $60,000 from Inside Edition for a videotape showing a former Ft. Lauderdale vice mayor having sex with a woman Rubin was defending. Rubin denied trying to sell the tape.[23] Another Florida couple reportedly signed a contract with Inside Edition after a trial involving a dispute with a neighbor.[24] Finally, the Florida attorney general went to court to block a mother's attempt to sell her story. The mother had been convicted on child abuse charges after her daughter's suicide.[25]

SPECIAL EVENT PROGRAMMING

Another controversial aspect of television programming involves networks or program producers that pay for the rights to special event programming, such as sporting events and other major events. Television coverage of the Olympics demonstrates the bidding wars for these events. In 1968, ABC paid $2.5 million for TV rights to the Winter Olympics. In 1976 ABC paid $10 million, in 1984, $91.5 million, and in 1988, $309 million for rights to the Winter Games.[26] In the meantime, NBC outbid ABC and CBS for the 1992 Summer games, paying $401 million for TV and cable rights.[27]

Other sports show similar bidding wars. CBS paid $1.1 billion for exclusive rights to broadcast the World Series, the playoffs, the All-star game and a dozen regular season baseball games through 1993. Meanwhile, NBC outbid CBS with a four-year deal for NBA telecasts at a cost of $600 million.[28]

The fantastic sums invested for the exclusive rights to these events point to one thing, the intense competition among the networks for advertisers and viewers. The networks hope that despite the hefty price tag, they will boost the network image, "...shore up ratings, please affiliates, entice advertisers and allow heavy promotion of prime-time shows."[29]

Another example occurred during the inauguration of President Clinton. HBO purchased rights to some pre-inauguration events and made them available to its subscribers.

The events networks bid for are not always sports. In 1986, ABC paid $10 million for the rights to broadcast the Liberty Weekend Celebration--the unveiling of the restored Statue of Liberty on its 100th birthday. The purchase led to wrangling among the networks. Roone Arledge of ABC initially said that he expected the other networks to honor ABC's "exclusive" rights just as his network would honor another's rights to the Super Bowl. However, the other networks argued that the act of public officials, including President Reagan, dedicating a national statue, should be open to all the press.[30] ABC finally agreed to share what it called the "news portions" of the opening ceremonies with rival networks, providing pool coverage of those segments.[31]

The issue with televising these special events is not the exorbitant sums of money spent for the rights, but the practice of purchasing "exclusive" rights to "cover" something that is supposed to be a major news event.[32] The problem is that the public has no choice in viewing the event. It (the public) must view the network that has the exclusive rights, never knowing if another network might cover the event better. The concern is not confined to the networks, for smaller media are finding restrictions on their access to events. For example, a small newspaper on the outskirts of Syracuse, New York, complained that officials of the Syracuse University Carrier Dome denied them (newspaper) ringside photo space for a Sugar Ray Leonard, Larry Bonds fight, even though both fighters were from the coverage area of the paper.[33] The reason: the space was reserved for HBO, which had purchased exclusive TV rights to the event. Once again, the issue was one of control. Editor and Publisher warned that the practice of selling exclusive rights could extend beyond sports, and asked: "What could be more attractive than selling the rights to cover the town council meetings to channel XYZ rather than raising taxes?"[34]

TELEVISION DRAMAS

The television bidding wars are most fierce when networks and producers seek the rights to real-life dramas. Just about any big news story with some particularly tragic or unusual aspect will end up as a TV movie. Among those who have signed for TV movie deals are Donna Rice; Vanessa Williams; Roswell Gilbert, who was convicted of fatally shooting his sick wife; and even television anchorwoman Christine Craft. The Baby M story aired too, as did New York's Preppy Murder case and the story of the Mayflower Madam. The bidding wars are so intense that, after 18-month-old Jessica McClure was pulled from a well in Midland, Texas, her parents and two separate rescue groups all signed TV contracts. The bidding wars were also heavy for the tale of Amy Fisher, the 17-year-old convicted of trying to kill the wife of the man she had an affair with. Three network versions of the Fisher story were prepared, and two were shown on the same night.

Why the intense competition for real life stories? As one Hollywood producer explained it, "Audiences like them better because they happened."[35] As a result, just about everyone with a story is looking for a producer, and every producer is seeking to sign the stories first. Lawyers and agents now specialize in helping people get the most money for their stories.

Real-life stories are not always purchased; they can also be fictionalized or developed from court transcripts, but obtaining legal rights ensures that there are no legal complications.[36] That's where the bidding wars come in, since whoever has the rights to a story is virtually assured of a piece of any movie deal that develops.

Competition among the networks for the best story is what drives the business of turning news headlines into TV movies. Made-for-TV movies can command top ratings, which in turn translates into advertising dollars. As a result, every TV producer is under pressure to go further than his competitors, to give his or her customers exclusively what they have not read or seen before. Of course, TV movies are not journalism per se, but they fit into the elastic definition of checkbook journalism as readily as competition for the same stories by magazines and book publishers. Further, local TV stations often tie local news segments to TV movies when they deal with topical issues such as incest or wife battering. In a **Washington Journalism Review** item, Joe Saltzman explained when fictional characters and actors portraying real characters are shown in newscasts with real newsmakers, they receive parity in our mind's eye, and the line between news/information and programming/entertainment disintegrates.[37]

CONCLUSIONS

Despite the questions about checkbook journalism, the television industry does not appear ready to stop paying for news and news-type items. Television so frequently blurs the line between journalism and entertainment that such techniques as video news releases and tabloid programs seem to raise only passing concern when ethical issues are raised. Much television programming, such as sports and special events, are of a news-like nature, although they are often thought of as entertainment. With television stations and networks competing with one another for ratings and advertisers, and with cable as well, ethical concerns take a backseat to pragmatic decisions.

As Shana Alexander noted, the problem with paying sources is that the media are manipulated, they give away a measure of control.[38] Television executives seem all too willing to give away control if doing so is cost effective. The difficulty with this approach to news and programming was raised by Steve Sanders:

> Is there a danger this practice (buying news) will become routine, as other sources come to expect something in return for information they possess?[39]

That already seems to be the case in television, as the recent growth of video news releases and paid candidate interviews indicates. Alexander wrote that with checkbook journalism there are "no rules, no guidelines, no etiquette and no gentlemen."[40] That may be the best evaluation of checkbook journalism and television.

1. Fred Fedler, "Checkbook Journalism Proliferates, Harms Both Public and Media," **Mass Comm Review**, Spring, 1980, 10.

2. Robert Stein, "The Excesses of Checkbook Journalism," **Columbia Journalism Review**, September/October, 1972, 48.

3. Virginia Dodge Fiedler and David H. Weaver, "Public Opinion on Investigative Reporting," **Newspaper Research Journal**, January, 1982, 58.

4. Philip Meyer, **Editors, Publishers, and Newspaper Ethics** (Washington, D.C.: American Society of Newspaper Editors, 1983), 58.

5. Steve Sanders, "To Pay or Not to Pay: A Case of Checkbook Journalism," **1985 Mass Comm Review**, vol. 12, 1985, 23.

6. "Checkbook Journalism," **Newsweek**, March 17, 1975, 17.

7. **Ibid**.

8. James Reston, "Highest Bidder Due News?" **Orlando Sentinel**, March 7, 1975, 23-A.

9. "On The Record," **Washington Journalism Review**, September/ October, 1978, 31.

10. Fred Fedler, **An Introduction to Mass Communication** (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1978), 133.

11. Nixon Tapes, CBS Buys a Video Memoir," **Time**, March 26, 1984, 67.

12. **Ibid**.

13. "Checkbook Journalism Revisited," **Columbia Journalism Review**, July/August 1975, 8.

14. "The Statesman from NBC News," **Columbia Journalism Review**, March-April 1978, 23.

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INDUSTRY RESPONSE IN THE AM STEREO MARKETPLACE: LETTERS TO TRADE MAGAZINE EDITORS, 1982 TO 1992

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Magazine Division

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INDUSTRY RESPONSE IN THE AM STEREO MARKETPLACE: LETTERS TO TRADE MAGAZINE EDITORS, 1982 TO 1992

This research analyzes letters to editors about AM stereo appearing in the trades *Broadcasting* and *Radio World*. Content analysis of 167 letters dated March 1982 through November 1992 assesses what broadcast industry members said in the decade after the FCC's unprecedented 1982 decision not to set an industry standard for AM stereo broadcast transmission. Information in the letters contributes information about the previously unknown broadcast marketplace method of technical standard-setting.

INDUSTRY RESPONSE IN THE AM STEREO MARKETPLACE: LETTERS TO TRADE MAGAZINE EDITORS, 1982 TO 1992

The FCC and the broadcast trades

In the United States, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) is the governmental agency charged with selecting broadcast transmission system standards. In standards proceedings carried to completion, the FCC typically opens an inquiry into the feasibility and necessity of a new technology, follows with at least one notice of proposed rulemaking, and concludes with a rulemaking proceeding. The trades "go and report that decision to complete the process" (Brenner, 1992, p. 95).

Initial inquiries are usually prompted by petitions from broadcast interest groups or from manufacturers hoping to market their innovations. Opinions and comments about the inquiry are solicited by the FCC, and further opportunities are granted for subsequent replies. Meanwhile, the Commission's various research departments study and test proposed systems. In the final rulemaking proceeding, the Commission announces both its decision of the industry system standard, and the date when stations may begin using the new technology.

As the FCC proceeds along its course, various trade magazines report the Commission's actions to the industry, giving "the reader a satisfying and accessible entry to the broad array of what is going on at the FCC" (Brenner, 1992, p. 103) "Albeit passive," broadcast trade magazines "can play a role" in both decisions and "nondecisions," and "often serve as a window on the 'real world' for regulators (and other readers)" (Brenner, 1992, p. 95).

The AM stereo marketplace decision

From 1977 to 1980, the FCC followed traditional procedure in seeking a system standard for AM stereophonic broadcasting. Having lost 40 percent of its audience to high fidelity FM in less than 20 years, it was widely held that stereo might provide the necessary remedy for AM's ills.

Various industry factions lobbied for one or another of five competing systems proposed by Belar, Kahn, Motorola, Magnavox, and Harris. The FCC struggled over which would best serve the public interest. In 1980, the FCC "tentatively" chose Magnavox as the standard, and the news was leaked to the trades. Tremendous negative feedback ensued, forcing the FCC to reconsider (FCC, 1980, p. 2) and to resume its quest under the increasing scrutiny of the trades.

Unable to make a decision, the FCC announced on March 4, 1982, that the matter would be left to the marketplace. Concluding "the marketplace will correct whatever deficiencies may exist" (Ray, 1990, p. 170), the FCC's self-described "bold, new step" (FCC, 1982, p. 17) was final. For the first time, the industry was forced to establish its own transmission standard. Some in the industry believed the FCC left AM in a hopeless situation. Each of the five systems was incompatible with the other, meaning that each could only be decoded by a receiver employing the same technology. The Commission, however, appeared confident the best system would prevail: "Our society generally has not seen fit to supplant the free decisions of consumers with those imposed by government, and there is no convincing reason why AM radio" should be given preferential treatment (FCC issues, 1982, p. 73).

Those in the business of AM broadcasting and receiver equipment manufacturing did not share the FCC's optimism. Realizing that the market might eventually filter out one of the five systems, most receiver manufacturers and AM stations were reluctant to align with one. As a result, few manufacturers built receivers, few stations installed AM stereo, and the listening public was never given a reasonable opportunity to accept or reject the technology.

Within two years after the marketplace decision, just the systems of Motorola and Kahn remained. Surprisingly, receivers capable of decoding all five systems emerged, but were unsuccessful. Over the years, a number of broadcast industry players petitioned the FCC to reconsider. Obligated legally to answer the petitions, the FCC purposely delayed public comment until 1988 when it could deny them all in one tidy proceeding. The FCC said there was no need to intervene, because in its opinion the market was working. Citing Motorola's lead over Kahn as evidence, the Commission declared the system a de facto standard (FCC, 1988). Nonetheless, the Kahn company has refused to concede, leaving the AM stereo standard question unanswered. However, the lack of a standard cannot be attributed to lack of effort on the part of many writers of letters to the editor of broadcast trade magazines.

Letters to the editor and AM stereo

AM stereo illustrates more than the FCC's reluctance to regulate; it exemplifies the pros and cons of the marketplace, a previously unknown player in standard-setting (Huff, 1991). Various studies have examined the events which occurred before and after the marketplace decision1, and each has offered points of view of the FCC and the AM stereo system competitors. However, little attention has been given to the perspectives of those most directly affected by the marketplace decision -- managers and engineers of AM stations. One way to gain a better understanding of the AM stereo marketplace is through letters written to trade magazine editors.

Researchers indicate that letters to the editor are typically "based on some expertise" of the writer (Singletary, 1976, p. 536). Readers have "a fairly high degree of acceptance" of letters to editors, find them "reliable," and would complain if letters were not available to them (Singletary, 1976, p. 536). Often, persons who read letters are "testing public opinion on issues," and writers are "letting off steam" (Davis & Rarick, 1964, pp. 108-109) in a cathartic manner (Singletary, 1976, p. 536). Others look for a "sounding board," a kind of feedback, "a map of his ideas or opinions in relation to those of others, in regard to, for instance, logic, popularity of the idea, appropriate emphasis, and strength of feeling" (Grey & Brown, 1970, p. 471).

Readers of communication trade magazines may represent an even more knowledgeable group than those typically studied. For one, these people have more than just a passing interest in a topic. They are a part of the industry about which they write, and they might actually have an impact on a given situation. They have vested interests and feel compelled to let others know what they believe. The broadcast trade magazines are an avenue by which one can speak or hear what others in similar situations are thinking.

There is no presumption here that letters to trade magazines are the best indicator of opinion about AM stereo or any other matter. Indeed, one of the primary problems in using letters to editors as indicators of public attitudes is that the writers are a self-selected group. Despite being self-selected, however, the FCC depends greatly on letter writing to help make decisions. Summaries of such correspondences are made available in the texts of the FCC's various inquiries and rulemaking dockets. Such written input prompted the FCC's initial reversal of the Magnavox decision in 1980. Therefore, there is a presumption industry letters to the trades might be "valuable indicators of political attitudes, frustrations and change" (Grey & Brown, 1970, p. 471; Foster & Friedrich, 1937) in the broadcast industry -- a rather self-selected group in itself. While most studies about letters to editors have focused on newspapers and the writers of those letters, little or no research exists concerning broadcast trade magazine letters, the people who write them, and what they write. Even more rare are applications of content analysis to events other than political campaigns.

Purpose

To add to our limited knowledge about trade magazine letters to editors, AM and AM stereo radio, and the previously unknown broadcast marketplace, this research analyzes content of letters to editors appearing in two leading broadcast industry trade magazines. Focusing on the first ten years of the AM stereo marketplace, a sample of 167 letters was gathered from *Broadcasting* and *Radio World*. The study documents certain data about the writers and assesses what these induviduals said about AM stereo after the FCC's unprecedented marketplace decision. Because the marketplace method of technical standard-setting was being implemented for the first time in FCC history, no yardstick of any kind exists by which to measure its effectiveness.

Background and Method

Copies of letters were gathered via a comprehensive search through issues of Broadcasting and Radio World dated from March 1982 through November 1992. To be included in the sample, letters were required to refer specifically to AM stereo. General AM radio letters, for example, were eliminated from analysis. A total of 167 letters met the criteria. Each letter included the name of the writer, and most listed the writer's title, position, affiliation, and geographic base. These were quantified. Each letter was coded, read, and analyzed for themes. An additional coder examined every fourth letter (25 percent) of the sample. Little difference was noted between the coders, and discussion brought agreement on all themes. Themes were quantified and placed into common categories.

Results

Upper level management positions were responsible for 72 letters (43.11 percent). Of these, 43 (25.75 percent) were from Presidents/CEOs, and nine of the 40 (5.39 percent) were written by Presidents/CEOs of companies manufacturing AM stereo systems. One letter was from Belar President Arno Meyer and eight were written by Leonard Kahn, President of Kahn/Hazeltine. General Managers were a distant second in frequency with 11 (6.59 percent). Surprisingly, only two letters were written by company owners (see Table 1). Typically, the owner of a small market AM station would also serve as President or CEO. Because small market stations appeared most vulnerable to AM's slide, one would tend to predict more owners would respond about AM stereo.

President/General Managers wrote seven letters (4.19 percent); Vice Presidents, five (2.99 percent); Vice President/General Managers, four (2.40 percent); and General Managers, 11 (6.59 percent).

Table 1

Positions held by letter writers

Position	(n)	%
Upper Level Management	66	39.52
Company Owner	1	0.60
President/CEO	40	23.95
President/General Manager	7	4.19
Vice President	4	2.40
Vice President/General Manager	4	2.40
General Manager	10	5.99
Middle Level Management	14	8.38
Operations Manager	5	2.99
Program Director	6	3.59
Sales Manager/Representatives	3	1.80
Engineering	52	31.14
Others	26	15.57
Consultant	5	2.99
Generic Broadcast Position	14	8.38
Unknown Affiliation	7	4.19

Only 14 letters (8.38 percent) came from middle management. Operations Managers wrote five (2.99 percent). Program Directors wrote six (3.59 percent), and Sales Managers or Sales Representatives wrote three (1.80 percent).

The largest response for a single position came from engineers with 54 letters (32.34%), or nearly one-third of the total sample. Engineering was placed in a singular category because of the nature of the position. Some engineers perform other duties in the industry, but those with engineer listed prominently as a title were not considered management level. Presumably, since the FCC left the technical standard decision to the broadcasters, engineers would play a significant role in selecting or recommending an AM stereo system. As with Presidents/CEOs, however, six of the letters from engineers were written by a single, staunch supporter of Kahn's system.

Another 26 letters (15.57 percent) were written by persons who did not specifically list titles, such as consultants of an unknown nature. Thus, they were grouped with generic broadcast positions (14 or 8.38 percent) and the eight (4.79 percent) with no affiliation given. Persons placed into generic broadcast categories generally listed an affiliation, but did not list a title. Writers offering no affiliation typically included only their name and/or an address.

A total of 137 individuals wrote just one letter each (82.04 percent). Seven persons wrote two letters each (4.19 percent), and three wrote three each (1.80 percent). One individual wrote six, and another wrote eight.

Of the 167 total AM stereo letters, 77 (46.11 percent) contained a single theme and 90 letters (53.89 percent) had multiple themes. Forty-nine letters had two themes (29.34 percent); 27 letters had three themes (16.17 percent); 11 letters had four themes (6.59 percent); one letter had five themes; one letter had six themes; and one letter had seven different themes.

1) ***Steps must be taken to ensure AM stereo success*** (see Table 2). By far, the most prevalent argument appeared in 156 (93.41 percent) of the letters: AM stereo, in and of itself, cannot prosper in the marketplace. Forty-eight writers (28.74 percent) said that manufacturers must forge ahead with the production of AM stereo receivers. Eleven of those letters (6.59 percent) advocated manufacture of multi-decoding receivers capable of deciphering the signals of all five AM stereo transmission systems. One even suggested that the FCC make multi-decoders mandatory. On the other hand, just 17

writers (10.18 percent) argued that broadcasters' should first make a decision on a standard system.

Three letter writers said delivery systems, or transmission and reception equipment, were not the answer. Rather, proper programming strategies are more important to AM success. However, eight times as many (24 or 14.37 percent) said a combination of delivery systems and programming were important for AM stereo to succeed. Just one writer suggested delivery systems alone were important.

Table 2

Steps must be taken to ensure AM stereo success
(156 of 167, 93.41%)

Theme	(n)	%Category	%Total
Receivers are key to AM stereo success	37	23.72	22.16
Supports multi-decoding receivers	11	7.05	6.59
Broadcasters need to make decision on standard system	17	10.90	10.18
Delivery systems (transmission and reception) not the answer, programming is	3	1.92	1.80
Delivery systems (transmission and reception) and programming are answer	24	15.38	14.37
Delivery systems (transmission and reception) are answer	1	0.64	0.60
AM stereo will succeed only with other technical upgrades	22	14.10	13.17
AM stereo is working	5	3.21	2.99
Promote AM stereo	24	15.38	14.37
Educate consumers	13	8.33	7.78

In the second most prevalent category, 37 writers (22.16 percent) said AM stereo's primary problem is lack of promotion and consumer education. Two of the letters favoring promotion, however, urged holding off any campaign until AM stereo is perfected. Twenty-two other writers (13.17 percent) said AM stereo will succeed only in combination with other technical upgrades, such as overall AM improvement in sound quality and elimination of interference. One person called for the FCC to base license renewal on AM improvement. Four writers said AM stereo is working successfully for them.

2) ***AM stereo systems*** (see Table 3). Sixty-four letters (38.32 percent) supported or opposed at least one AM stereo system. In fact, in all but one letter Kahn and Motorola were the only systems mentioned of the original five. In the letter, the writer favored Motorola and opposed the systems of Magnavox, Harris, and Kahn by name. Belar was cited only in President Arno Meyer's letter written to dispute information in a Broadcasting magazine article. The Kahn system received support in 36 letters (21.56 percent). Of those, 14 letters (8.38 percent) also opposed Motorola; one suggested Kahn and Motorola should merge their systems; and another said Kahn developed a good system but knew nothing about marketing it. The Kahn system was opposed in only eight letters (4.79 percent), for a ratio of about four and one-half for Kahn to one for Motorola.

Table 3

AM stereo systems
(64 of 167, 38.32%)

Theme	(n)	%Category	%Total
Supports Kahn system and rejects Motorola	14	21.88	8.38
Supports Motorola system and rejects Kahn	7	10.94	4.19
Opposes Kahn system	1	1.56	0.60
Opposes Motorola system	3	4.69	1.80
Supports Kahn system	21	32.81	12.57
Supports Motorola system	13	20.31	7.78
Kahn and Motorola should merge systems	1	1.56	0.60
Marketplace battle may kill AM stereo	4	6.25	2.40

Motorola was the system of preference in 21 letters (12.57 percent). Kahn was also rejected in seven of the pro-Motorola letters (4.19 percent). Motorola was opposed in a total of 17 letters (10.18 percent), almost an even ratio between supporters and opposition. Four letters (2.40 percent) indicated a fear that the prolonged Kahn vs. Motorola battle might permanently damage the cause of AM stereo.

3) ***Response to trade magazine content*** (see Table 4). Of the 167 total letters, 62 (37.13 percent) contained themes responsive to items previously written in the trades. Of 32 letters inspired by previous letters to the editor, 16 were in support (9.58 percent) and 16 were in opposition (9.58 percent).

In assessing theme categories, no distinction was made between articles and editorials. Rather, 30 letters (17.96 percent) written in response to trade magazine staff articles or editorials were placed under the umbrella of editorial content. Only eight letters (4.79 percent) supported views of trade magazines, while 21 (12.57 percent) wrote to oppose them. One other letter responded to an advertisement in a trade.

Table 4

Response to trade magazine content
(62 of 167, 37.13%)

Theme	(n)	%Category	%Total
Supports trade magazine letter	16	25.81	9.58
Opposes trade magazine letter	16	25.81	9.58
Supports trade magazine editorial content	8	12.90	4.79
Opposes trade magazine editorial content	21	33.87	12.57
Supports trade magazine advertisement	1	1.61	0.60

4) ***Reaction to the Marketplace Decision*** (see Table 5). Of the 167 letters, 50 (29.94 percent) responded with themes directly related to the marketplace, particularly in relation to governmental intervention. Nine writers (5.39 percent) said the FCC foiled AM stereo by not picking a standard, and another nine (5.39 percent) urged the FCC to reconsider its decision and adopt an AM stereo system

standard. Two others (1.20 percent) said the marketplace is not working, and six (3.59 percent) suggested legislators must get involved and help AM stereo succeed. Three letters (1.80 percent) said the marketplace is working, and two others (1.20 percent) wanted no legislative involvement at all.

Nine letter writers supported the concept of AM stereo (5.70 percent), five opposed the concept of AM stereo (2.99 percent), and three were undecided about AM stereo's role in aiding AM (1.80 percent).

Table 5

Reaction to the Marketplace Decision
(50 of 167, 29.94%)

Theme	(n)	%Category	%Total
FCC foiled AM stereo	9	18.00	5.70
The marketplace is working	3	6.00	1.80
The marketplace is not working	2	4.00	2.40
The FCC should reconsider and adopt an AM stereo standard	9	18.00	5.70
Legislators must help AM	6	12.00	3.60
Legislators must not help AM	2	4.00	2.40
Supports AM stereo concept	9	18.00	5.70
Opposes AM stereo concept	5	10.00	2.99
Undecided on AM stereo concept	3	6.00	1.80

5) ***Miscellaneous***. Three letters (1.80 percent) contained themes which did not fit into any of the other four categories. Two of the three, however, mentioned the Japanese. One letter from a broadcaster indicated a desire to wait for the Japanese government to pick an AM stereo system. The other wrote to complain of Japan's objection to any U.S. AM stereo legislation. A third letter offered an engineering shortcut suggestion concerning AM stereo installation.

Table 6

Miscellaneous
(3 of 167, 1.80%)

Theme	(n)	%Category	%Total
Waiting for Japanese to pick AM stereo system	1	33.33	0.60
Opposes Japanese lobbying in U.S.	1	33.33	0.60
Engineering suggestion	1	33.33	0.60

Discussion

Perhaps the most important finding, as well as the most puzzling, was the relative lack of venom displayed toward the FCC for sending the AM stereo decision to the marketplace. In the entire 50-year history of the FCC, the Commission had never failed to select a technical transmission standard. Most writers appeared more interested in the success of the AM stereo marketplace, rather than in blaming the FCC for the marketplace decision. Still, though the industry seemed ready and willing to give the marketplace a chance, there was uncertainty over how to go about it. Should the broadcasters pick a system, or should receiver manufacturers shoulder the responsibility? Letter writers, by a two-to-one margin, said receivers were more important in the success of AM stereo than were systems.

Kahn's system received nearly twice the support of Motorola. Motorola's huge lead over Kahn in numbers of AM stereo systems in use could have had an impact. For instance, Kahn letters could have been accelerated to fight a losing cause.

Several findings are consistent with previous studies. Published items are often stimulated by editorials, articles, or other letters to editors. Frequently, many letter writers are opposed to someone or something. Those writing letters perceive themselves as experts, but are also looking for the approval of their peers. Writers also seek to inspire others to make their feelings known. They may also be frustrated because they have been unsuccessful in using other channels. Writers of letters to broadcast trades, however, may accomplish more than just "letting off steam." Indeed, as integral parts of the industry about which they write, trade magazine letter writers may have a better chance at impacting a situation than do writers to the popular press.

As a measure of industry sentiment, the research reported here may be beneficial in gaining a better perspective on the thoughts of broadcasters toward the AM stereo marketplace. Some generalizations can be made about attitudes and interests of broadcasters. Broadcast trade magazine letter writers appear to be an informed group. As active members of the industry about which they write, they have vested interests and feel compelled to speak and to hear from others in similar situations. Trade magazines provide a forum for open exchange which may serve as a valid barometer of industry opinion. However, more research is needed.

NOTE

1 See, for example: Huff, W.A.K. (1987). A history of AM stereo broadcasting to 1987. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Southern Mississippi; Huff, W.A.K. "FCC Standard-Setting with Regard to FM Stereo and AM Stereo." (1991, Fall). Journalism Quarterly, 68 (3), 483-490; Huff, W.A.K. (1992). "AM Stereo in the Marketplace: The Solution Still Eludes." Journal of Radio Studies, 1, 15-30; Klopfenstein, B.C. & Sedman, D. (1990, Spring). Technical standards and the marketplace: The case of AM stereo. Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media, 34 (2), 171-194; Miller, C. (1984, Winter). AM stereo: After all these years, is the marketplace ready? Feedback, 14-18; Pennybacker, J.H. & Mott, D.R. (1984, Winter). AM stereo: Broadcasters' acceptance. Feedback, 19-21; and, Sterling, C.H. (1982, Autumn). The FCC and changing technological standards. Journal of Communication, 32 (1), 137-147.

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WISCONSIN DEATH TRIP AS CASE STUDY ON THE QUESTIONABLE USES OF 19TH CENTURY PHOTOGRAPHS IN HISTORICAL RESEARCH

by

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Paper presented to a joint session of the Visual Communication and History Divisions of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication, annual convention, Kansas City, MO, August 11, 1993.

Over the past forty years, photography has gained prominence in the world of academia. Once considered the artist's handmaiden, for years photography has been studied not only from a technical and aesthetic standpoint, but also as a medium through which aspects of culture are expressed. Indeed, still photography allows us to reflect on the past, providing valuable evidence for researchers and historians.

As historian Peter Bunnell commented 25 years ago, ''Historical and personality photographs are most in demand and apparently most deeply appreciated not only by collectors of the medium but by those persons interested in the picture as an artifact from a precious lost time.[1]

The issue of photographs as artifacts has been addressed by researchers like Joanna Cohan Scherer and Alan Trachtenberg, who have sent up warning signals about working with 19th century photographs.[2] Scherer contends that there are at least six criteria a researcher should answer before attaching any authenticity to photographic meaning: Who took the photograph? When was it taken? Where was it taken? Why was it taken? What were the photographer's intentions and motivations?

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[1] Peter Bunnell, "Why Photography Now?" The New Republic (Oct. 29, 1977), p. 26.

[2] See Joanna Cohan Scherer, "You Can't Believe Your Eyes: Inaccuracies in the Photographs of North American Indians," Studies in the Anthropology of Visual Communication 2:2 (Fall 1975): pp. 67-79; and Alan Trachtenberg, "The Camera and Dr. Barnardo," Aperture (1975): pp. 68-77.

What type of photographic equipment was used? What was the subject's feelings toward being photographed?[3]

Trachtenberg notes that a researcher's tendency to group photographs in similar categories (like "documentation of urban poverty") can cause incorrect assumptions to be made about a body of work, like the images Dr. Barnardo made beginning in 1870 for internal use at his home for wayward and vagrant children.[4] Thus, using photographs in research is both demanding and challenging, which students can appreciate when given case studies to examine.

Not all historians follow Trachtenberg's and Scherer's suggestions, however. In fact, one historian in particular has made a considerable reputation by using photographs as evidence for his arguments while seeming to ignore many or most of their warnings.

Dr. Michael Lesy is among the most controversial[5] researchers of American photographs alive today primarily because of his unconventional first book. A graduate of Columbia University and the University of Wisconsin, Lesy received a Ph.D. from Rutgers University's Department of History, where he was a Woodrow Wilson Fellow. It was his dissertation that Pantheon Books published in 1973 as Wisconsin Death Trip, which was widely reviewed in both the popular and academic press. Lesy, who teaches at Hampshire College in Amherst, has published at least six other books since then and his fascination with both photography and death has continued;[6] however, this analysis is limited to WDT.

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[3] Scherer, op. cit.

[4] As Trachtenberg says, "Our impulse is to place the Barnardo pictures within a larger documentary tradition stems from the historical association between the term 'documentary' and pictures of the poor, the downtrodden, the outcast." Trachtenberg, op. cit., p. 70. However, not all pictures of the poor were intended to be documentary photographs.

[5] Reviews of WDT's first edition which attack his methods and/or his scholarship include: both Susan Sontag and Gerald Weales in the New York Review of Books' Phoebe Adams in Atlantic Monthly; Alexander and Harold Wilde in The Progressive; Clarence Brown in The Guardian; Philip French in New Statesman; Philip Stokes in British Journal of Photography; Merrill Hough in Mid-America: A Historical Review; Paul Haas, Wisconsin Magazine of History; David Danborn in Agricultural History; Richard W. Stoffle and Henry F. Dobyns in Ethnohistory; Michael Yampolsky in Afterimage; Gerald Weales in The North American Review; Andrew Allegretti in North Dakota History; an unattributed review in Virginia Quarterly Review; and Mrs. Frances Perry in the Black River Falls (WI) Banner Journal.

Thanks to the January 1991 re-release by Anchor Books of Doubleday, WDT remains in print. It should be noted that the original and most recent editions are nearly identical, with a few notable exceptions to be discussed later.

Although it is not clear why the book was reissued after briefly going out of print--there must continue to be a market--it does provide a marvelous case study for educators who teach classes where photography's history or impact on society is at issue.[7] It also could be used in classes where ethics or research methods are discussed. In fact, student responses to two slightly different M.A. comprehensive examination questions (see Appendix 1) provide important and insightful interpretations of Lesy's first book, revealing just how useful a teaching tool WDT really can be.

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[6] See: Real Life: Louisville in the Twenties (New York: Pantheon, 1976); Time Frames: The Meaning of Family Pictures (New York: Pantheon, 1980); Bearing Witness: A Photographic Chronicle of American Life, 1860-1945 (New York: Pantheon, 1983); Visible Light: Four Creative Biographies (New York: New York Times Books, 1985); The Forbidden Zone (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1987); and Rescues: The Live of Heroes (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1991). The first three books are about photographs and The Forbidden Zone concerns professionals who deal with death, including medical pathologists, undertakers, homicide detectives, death-row wardens, hospital attendants and professional soldiers.

About the Book[8]

By combining select newspaper accounts, insane asylum records, literary excerpts, ''local gossip,'' ''local history'' and photographs of the time, Lesy provides a representation in WDT of the social conditions around the turn of the century in Black River Falls, Wisconsin. Considering his thesis, his method of inquiry and his selection and presentation of evidence, it is not surprising the reaction to this book was largely negative when it was reviewed in the mid-1970s.

Analyzing Lesy's work is not an easy task, primarily because WDT is not just an historical account or a novel or a psychological profile of the residents of a small town--it is a combination of all three. Lesy's use of language presents yet another challenge: writing more like a poet or novelist, Lesy keeps his analysis rather brief and obscure. For example, below is what can be considered his statement of purpose from the book's foreword:

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[7] I have used Wisconsin Death Trip in my classes for many years at two different universities. The book has been a valuable case study in various classes, including ''Principles of Visual Communication'' at Marquette University and ''History of Photojournalism'' and ''Photography and Society'' at the University of Missouri-Columbia. In all cases, the students were asked to study the book before coming to class and they were asked their impressions of Lesy's work before I gave my critique of it.

[8] During our class discussions about WDT, various parts of this commentary about the book gets discussed with the students. Last spring semester I handed out a draft copy of this section to the students in my "Photography in Society" course.

> This book is an exercise in historical actuality, but it has only as much to do with history as the heat and spectrum of the light that makes it visible, or the retina and optical nerve of your eye. It is as much an exercise of history as it is an experiment of alchemy. Its primary intention is to make you experience the pages now before you as a flexible mirror that if turned one way can reflect the odor of the air that surrounded me as I wrote this; if turned another, can project your anticipations of next Monday; if turned again, can transmit the sound of breathing in the deep winter air of a room of eighty years ago, and if turned once again, this time backward on itself, can fuse all three images, and so can focus who I once was, what you might yet be, and what may have happened, all upon a single point of your imagination, and transform them like light focused by a lens on paper, from a lower form of energy to a higher.

Lesy purports to reveal the ''psychology or personality of events'' which took place in the Black River Falls area from 1885-1900. By carefully selecting newspaper articles about suicides, epidemics, depression, insanity and business failures, he creates a horror story about a small, rural American town consumed with fear, madness and mayhem. These newspaper clippings from the Badger State Banner are enhanced by town gossip and local history (these sources are never identified but critic A.D. Coleman contends Lesy is their author[9]). Also included are state and national news, advertisement copy, and entries from the Mendota State Mental Hospital's patient records. It should be noted that a small percentage of the newspaper accounts actually come from Black River Falls itself.

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[9] A.D. Coleman, ''Michael Lesy (I) : Wisconsin Death Trip,'' Light Readings (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979): p. 150.

Passages from the writings of Sinclair Lewis, Glenway Wescott, Edgar Lee Masters, and Hamlin Garland, whose fiction is not confined to the book's time period, are employed by Lesy as well.

By combining disjointed bits of information from a wide range of sources, Lesy builds a case for how the value systems of capitalism and Calvinism have warped the lives of rural Americans. Although the book supposedly focuses upon the 3,000 ''randomly assembled genetic patterns,'' as Lesy calls the residents of Black River Falls, his conclusions are far more generalized about rural life.

In the 19-page conclusion, Lesy's dissertation work becomes apparent when he discussed Robert Dugdale's The Jukes: A Study in Crime, Pauperism, and Disease, George Beard's American Nervousness, L.H. Bailey's Country Life in America and The Country Life Movement in the United States, and R.D. Laing's Sanity, Madness, and the Family. To further support his argument, Lesy advances select ideas from Marx, Freud, and Reich in an attempt to describe country towns at the end of the 19th century as ''charnel houses'' while surrounding counties were ''places of dry bones.''

Lesy uses these scholarly arguments, along with the other written documentation, in an attempt to convince his audience that rural Americans were subject to obsessive-compulsive behavior and paranoia. After reading page after page of newspaper clippings and literary excerpts about rape, murder, disease, arson, and bankruptcy, readers are left with the general impression that these topics were the primary concern of the residents of Black River Falls.

A closer examination of the material he selected for inclusion in the body of the book discloses that articles on these subjects probably appeared on an average of once every six weeks at the local level. In other words, the Badger State Banner was not filled with horror stories week after week, as Lesy would like us to believe. Unfortunately, he never admits to the contents of the other articles which appeared in the newspaper, much less the actual frequency of his type of news.

The method by which Lesy selected photographs to illustrate his point is equally troublesome. Of the 30,000 glass plate negatives made by Charles Van Schaick, the Black River Falls photographer, between 1885 and 1910, the State Historical Society of Wisconsin had a collection of between 2,200 and 3,000 plates.[10] Lesy selected about 140 which he considered ''to contain sufficient information to answer those questions about the changes at the end of the century.''

Unfortunately, Lesy never tells his audience if the less than 1 percent of the entire Van Schaick collection he uses is at all representative of the remaining 99+ percent.[11] The degree to which the photographs reproduced in the book are similar or dissimilar to the other images Van Schaick made of local residents, place and events of the time is an issue which needs to be addressed if we are to have faith in Lesy's scholarship.

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[10] At the end of the 1973 edition Lesy includes a statement called ''About This Book,'' where he says there were ''30,000 glass negatives'' from the Van Schaick collection and that 3,000 were selected by Paul Vanderbilt of the ''Wisconsin State Historical Society'' (incorrect name). It was these ''3,000 photographs'' from which he ''drew the inspiration for this book.'' However, in the 1991 edition, that same ''About This Book'' page now says there were 30,000-40,000 glass-plate negatives known as the Van Schaick Collection, including the work of two traveling photographers--C.R. Monroe and N.L. Ellis. ''From that collection 2,238 plates were selected by Paul Vanderbilt, Curator of Iconography at the State Historical Society of Wisconsin, in 1958.'' I am assuming the second version of this page is the more accurate of the two.

In addition to selecting a very small portion of the collection, Lesy admits to inserting pictures that the photographer ''would never have made.'' Once again, Lesy is unclear whether he means he has altered some of the glass plate negatives and/or he has included images from another collection. According to Lesy, ''The insertions and additions were rationalized in this way: the only way to go against a photographer's intentions is to destroy his negatives...The thing to worry about is meanings, not appearances.''

One does not have to be a photographer to find an ethical problem with his rationalization; severe cropping, extreme enlargement of a small portion of a negative, reversing a negative, and combining portions of several negatives are four very obvious ways of destroying a photographer's intentions. All these methods were employed by Lesy to help make--or some might say create--his point. Relying on deteriorated glass plates for new copies of the prints also created an eerie effect which most responsible researchers would point out as an unavoidable consequence of age and handling.

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[11] Because the numbers in the collection changed from the 1973 edition of this book to the 1991 edition, it is difficult to calculate an exact figure. Nevertheless, the number Lesy used in WDT remains less than 1 percent of the total Van Schaick Collection.

Interestingly, the complaints registered by some reviewers about his tampering with the photographic evidence probably is the reason a page which has negative numbers and brief descriptions of each photograph's contents (see Appendix 2) is included in the 1991 edition. This listing also includes descriptors like "montage," "reversed," "opposite" and "detail," which is significant information about the techniques he employed from the beginning but did not share with readers of WDT's first edition. However, Lesy still does not address the issue of the deteriorated glass plates in his most recent edition.

As Appendix 2 also shows, some Jackson County residents are identified by name in this new listing, which has the potential of making these photographs about specific individuals rather than just the anonymous "everyman" presented in WDT's first edition. Nevertheless, placement at the back of the 1991 edition indicates Lesy does not want to play this information too prominently.

Several important matters concerning photographic technology and conventions at the time also were not emphasized enough by Lesy. Because of the long exposure times for glass plates and the slowness of the camera lenses at the time, it was necessary for Van Schaick's subjects to hold very still, which usually resulted in very stern, unblinking expressions and stiff bodies.

Taking part in the act of picture-making in the late 1800s was so novel and such a solemn occasion that it is not surprising the photographs' subjects are dressed formally and appear uncomfortable. Unfortunately, Lesy fails to tell the reader about these conventions, apparently hoping current sensibilities and more recent psychiatric theory would be applied by viewers coming to grips with these nearly 100-year-old photographs.

Also, Lesy failed to note anywhere that photographing the dead in their coffins was an accepted practice at the time. Pictures of dead children were commonplace then because that may have been one of the few times--or the only time--a child's image would have been captured on film.

It was 1888 before the Eastman Company even introduced the Kodak, the first successful roll-film camera, so family snapshots were not popular with the general public until later. Thus, Lesy again relies on current sensibilities toward photography of the dead to advance his theme of morbidity and instability in rural Wisconsin in the late 1800s.

The fact that the pages of WDT are not numbered is not a coincidence. This format gives the book the look of a family album/diary, more of a found object than a constructed one. The new edition remains unpaged.

Another major concern with this book is Lesy's disregard for the socio-economic conditions under which the people of Black River Falls were living. In his introduction, Lesy spent very little time informing his readers of the depression of 1893, or the failure of two major industries (logging and iron works) around that time, or the depletion of farm land in that part of the state.

As Warren Susman says in the 1973 preface, Lesy is not interested in the ''wide series of development in American domestic and international political life'' which many historians believe explain the crisis of the 1890s. Instead, Lesy is interested in revealing the

American Nightmare, rather than the American Dream, as Susman notes in the 1973 edition's preface.[12]

Student Responses to Questions about WDT

Comprehensive exams at the Missouri School of Journalism provide an opportunity for students to apply what they have learned in all their classes and through their outside reading to a wide range of questions from the faculty.[13] Two of the last three questions I have asked during comps have concerned WDT because it allows me to see how well students can incorporate other materials and their own thinking about Lesy's use of old photographs in his historical research.

When answering my March 1992 comprehensive examination question about the legitimacy and consequences of Lesy's use of photographs outside of their original context (see Appendix 1, part 2), students had these insights:[14]

--''By 'expropriating' these particular photos as Lesy has done, he has used them instead as illustrations, works of art designed by his own twentieth century ideas of what that place and time were like. This is not history, nor is it photojournalism. It is merely a man with an idea and a box of pictures creating some kind of representation art.'' (Student #26/92)

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[12] Curiously, Professor Susman's preface is not included in the 1991 edition. Instead, the 1991 book begins with the same introduction Lesy wrote for the 1973 edition.

[13] Students are not restricted to answering questions posed by instructors with whom they have had courses. Studying for comps has been known to be a group activity with students who have been in class together, so there is some sharing of information, probably making it possible to pass an answer with a minimum score. Students who get higher marks for their answers have integrated and analyzed material from a number of sources rather than simply regurgitating the facts.

[14] I am quoting from these anonymous test answers believing that under the Fair Use Doctrine I may do so for nonprofit educational purposes. Applying "fair use" standards assumes these answers have some economic value to their authors, which is debatable.

--''Historians cannot pick and choose from history to prove a point, or their work will be invalid...For a historian, this practice is illegitimate; for an artist, sure.'' (Student #25/92)

--''As scholarship, Lesy's book is deeply flawed in it adherence to revered principles of revealing methodology, preserving context, and accurate sampling. As artistic expression, it is a remarkable journey through the condensed suffering of an ultimately mythical place. I suspect that his book intends to call into question the accepted practices of historical scholarship and contemporary methods of preserving context and objectivity, as well as the overestimated assumptions of photography's truthfulness.'' (Student #22/92)

--''Consequences of this practice? Perhaps people will trust versions of history less. I don't see that as much of a problem--all of history is just that: versions. Someone's retelling or reinterpretation of events.'' (Student #1/92)

As for the impact of combining words which were not originally intended to go with the photographs, students had this to say about Lesy's book:

--''So, he has altered the original meaning of the photographs. And he has altered the original meaning of the text. By putting them together, he has done an even greater harm than either of the two individually--he has preyed upon the 'third effect' [Wilson Hick's term]...Philosopher Roland Barthes says that text also anchors the meaning of images, that text tells us how to decode the symbols that we are presented by an image. It is clear that Lesy knows all of this--he knows the third effect he has created, he knows how the reader will decode the images.'' (Student #26/92)

--''He makes much use of the so-called 'principle of the third effect,' in which imagery plus words equal a message larger than the sum of the parts. He uses repetition of news accounts of similar events...until they all begin to take on elements of horror or ominousness...'' (Student #22/92)

--''A semiologist would call this mythmaking--the transformation of a message by its relation to surrounding messages. ('Myth,' here, is not necessarily false...) To this end, Lesy's use of words in WDT was not intended to explain the photographs (as cutlines would), but rather to change the meaning of both the photographs and the words themselves. It may be argued that the 'legitimate' pairing of supposedly factual cutlines with photographs also alters the meaning of each, in which case Lesy's major transgression is being obvious about it.'' (Student #1/92)

These students' remarks, written under extreme pressure and a limited time period,[15] clearly show they have given Lesy's work a great deal of consideration and many of them have applied what they learned from other authors as well. Some students make a distinction between WDT as history and WDT as art, believing that it fails as history but could be considered a success as art or literature.

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[15] Comprehensive exams at the Missouri School of Journalism are required of all M.A. students before graduation and normally are taken the semester before the students begin concentrated work on their professional project or thesis. The exams typically are scheduled for a Wednesday and Thursday afternoon for four hours each day. My question is part of the second day when students must answer a total of four questions but have more than 25 from which to choose. It is safe to assume that most of the students who answer my question have taken either my ''History of Photojournalism'' or ''Photography in Society'' course, but it certainly is not a requirement.

In other words, as one book reviewer wrote, ''To call such a study based on these [things] alone an 'exercise in historical actuality' is surely, to put it politely, a misnomer. Poetry, perhaps, even if rather mordant poetry, but hardly historical actuality.[16]" I do not share published reviews like this one with the students in class, although it is conceivable that some students look them up independently.

Students answering my comprehensive exam question in March 1993 saw similar problems arising from Lesy's contentions that WDT was history. As Student #42/93 notes, ''The mission of historical research should be to uncover what is there and not shape the history and documents to fit your message...His work is representative of an art movement that sought to create new contexts with found objects.'' Another says, ''By using text which fits his needs and photographs that fit his needs and placing them together, Lesy creates what might be better known as a novel. Nothing more, nothing less.'' (Student #3/93)

Put yet another way, Student #44/93 says, ''Michael Lesy takes advantage of this assumed objectivity, this apparent 'truth' that a photograph communicates and by combining photographs with a twisted selection of text, creates an interesting piece of personal expression, but a troubling piece of historic research.''

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[16] ''Notes on Current Books: Wisconsin Death Trip,'' Virginia Quarterly Review 49:4 (Autumn 1973): p. clxxii.

After pointing out WDT's weaknesses, Student #31/93 says, ''All this said, I enjoyed reading DEATH TRIP as sort of rural historical horror novel. If we look at Lesy's work as an avantgarde fiction/text construction, much like work at the end of John Berger and Jean Mohr's ANOTHER WAY OF TELLING, then it becomes more palatable.''

In fact, this is where Lesy does succeed. As A.D. Coleman points out, there is a ''new journalism'' quality to WDT which creates a ''family album of the damned."[17]

Conclusions

WDT first came to my attention in the mid-1970s and went on to become the subject of a paper in a historical research methods course. The lessons learned by carefully examining this book, its reviews, and the literature on photography are as powerful today as they were more than 25 year ago. Luckily, the newest edition of WDT allows students currently enrolled to have a similar experience about researching photographs and using them as evidence.

Whether students will be conducting research where photographs are part of the evidence or they will do nothing more than consume other photographic books like WDT, learning to ask important questions about the work will serve them well throughout their lives. I am grateful to Michael Lesy for providing a meaty case study for our students.

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[17] Coleman, op. cit., pp. 151-152. This review was first published in the New York Times on July 1, 1973.

It seems clear from the answers I have received over two separate comprehensive examination questions that students draw from a variety of experiences and readings as they analyze Lesy's methods in constructing Wisconsin Death Trip, which is exactly what I had hoped they would do.

APPENDIX 1

Part 1: Comprehensive exam question, March 1993

One researcher has said, ''The ultimate goal research must therefore be to carefully examine and to detail the circumstances of each image as far as possible in order to understand the historical and anthropological circumstances behind each.'' [Joanna Scherer, p. 19] Please use this statement to analyze Michael Lesy's recently re-released Wisconsin Death Trip. Be specific in your critique, making sure you address how the text interacts with the photographs and the consequences of this pairing.

Part 2: Comprehensive exam question, March 1992

Wisconsin Death Trip uses photographs outside of their original context. Please address the legitimacy and consequences of this expropriation and its general implications for visual communicators. Also, words were combined with the photographs in this book which were not originally intended to be presented with these images (cutlines ARE intended to be presented with photographs in newspapers and magazines). How does this practice of combining photographs with words by historian/author Michael Lesy impact on the total package he is presenting? How does this practice change the way we see the photographs, or does it? How do the text and photographs interact? Address the legitimacy and consequences of this practice.

Appendix 2

Listed below are the negative numbers attached to the photographs in this book which appear courtesy of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin. Please refer to these numbers when requesting information about individual pictures. The State Historical Society of Wisconsin is located at 816 State Street, Madison, Wisconsin 53706.

Front cover		
montage (left)	WHi(V24)1871	flowers
Front cover		
montage (right)	WHi(V24)1977	family
Back cover		
montage	WHi(X3)25306	brothers
Frontispiece		
detail (reversed)	WHi(V2)331	white stallion
Opposite Introduction		
detail (reversed)	WHi(V2)331	
Section 1		
detail (reversed)	WHi(V2)331	
detail (reversed)	WHi(V2)331	
detail	WHi(V2)329	black stallion
detail	WHi(V2)328	
Chapter 1888–9	WHi(V24)2214	woman on horse
	WHi(V2)973	bathing baby
(reversed)	WHi(V2)974	infant in chair
	WHi(V2)722	child in coffin
montage (left)	WHi(V22)1292	memorial wreath
montage (right)	WHi(V2)718	portrait of a baby
	WHi(V2)723	infant in coffin
	WHi(V2)724	two children in coffins
	WHi(V2)548	bedroom interior
photo left	WHi(V24)1964	woman with crutch
photo right	WHi(V24)1984	studio portrait
Chapter 1890	WHi(V2)645	women and children
montage	WHi(V24)2052	class picture
montage (reversed)	WHi(V24)1851	girls with tambourines
	WHi(V24)1850	tambourines round
montage	WHi(V24)1862	high school graduation
montage	WHi(V2)690	unidentified portrait
	WHi(X3)25315	oval portrait
	WHi(V24)1963	group portrait with swing
detail	WHi(V24)1965	
detail	WHi(V24)1965	
Chapter 1891		
opposite	WHi(X3)24068	Pauline L'Allemand
montage	WHi(V2)789	in the garden
montage (center)	WHi(V24)1871	memorial wreath
montage (top)	WHi(X3)24068	
montage (bottom)	WHi(V2)706	portrait with veil
	WHi(X3)25297	Anna Berger, 1903
	WHi(V2)707	studio portrait
	WHi(V2)90	Black River Falls
	WHi(V2)41	J. J. McGillivray shop
	WHi(V2)92	Jim Kelly in straw hat

Chapter 1892		
opposite (detail)	WHi(X3)25295	unidentified portrait
	Public Domain	unidentified woman
	WHi(V2)650	costumed individuals
montage	WHi(V24)1957	double portrait
	WHi(V2)732	Flora Thundercloud
Chapter 1893		
opposite	WHi(X3)22691	Mrs. Hendricks
	WHi(V2)459	outdoor memorial display
	WHi(V2)689	portrait
	WHi(V22)1280	memorial display in studio
	WHi(X3)24738	Mrs. Geo. Adams
montage	WHi(X3)25301	Yeatman sisters
	WHi(V2)690	female portrait
same page (left)	WHi(V2)692	winter outfit
same page (right)	WHi(X3)25296	seated portrait
same page (left)	WHi(V24)1926	portrait with white collar
same page (right)	WHi(V2)686	portrait with plaid tie
	WHi(X3)25302	double portrait
	WHi(V2)643	Eli and Mary Tiffany
	WHi(V22)1453	portrait of an elderly woman
	WHi(V2)722	child in coffin
Chapter 1894		
opposite	WHi(V24)1873	Memorial anchor wreath
Section 2	WHi(V2)988	steam tractor
	WHi(X3)25313	seated male portrait
	WHi(V2)470	male portrait with hat
	WHi(V2)476	male portrait
	WHi(V2)477	portrait in overalls
montage	WHi(X3)25304	brothers
Chapter 1895		
opposite (montage)	WHi(X3)25308	portrait with deer head
montage	WHi(X3)25311	Jule and Joe Hubert
montage	WHi(X3)25298	"smoking cigars"
	WHi(V22)1347	formal dress
	WHi(X3)25293	"Rosey" on steps
same page (left)	WHi(V24)1931	portrait with top hat
same page (right)	WHi(V2)651	double portrait
same page (left)	WHi(X3)25310	portrait with dwarf
same page (right)	WHi(X3)25309	group portrait
	WHi(V2)631	portrait with headdresses
	WHi(V2)304	portrait in black lace
	WHi(X3)23082	barbershop
	WHi(X3)23098	Mr. Hendricks, a barber
	WHi(V2)127	O. C. O'Hearn grocery
Chapter 1896		
opposite	WHi(X3)25294	hat shop window
	WHi(V24)1689	bicycle repair shop
	WHi(V24)1710	coins on desktop
	WHi(V2)107	outside Bone's saloon
	WHi(V24)1671	group outside grocery
	WHi(V24)1677	group outside drugstore
	WHi(V24)1721	in front of squash vine
	WHi(V2)43	posed below squash
	WHi(V2)1221	hi-jinks
	WHi(V24)1870	double anchor memorial
	WHi(V2)735	Moses Paquette with catch
	WHi(V22)1249	seated outside restaurant
	WHi(V24)1825	logging camp
	WHi(V24)1804	with railroad handcar
	WHi(V24)2202	tree nursery

Chapter 1897	WHi(V24)1906	Chief Little Blackhawk
montage	WHi(V24)1930	and friend
	WHi(V2)183	string musicians
	WHi(V24)1942	band
	WHi(V2)649	cow and calf
	WHi(V24)2306	threshing scene
detail	WHi(V24)1947	unidentified portrait
montage	WHi(V2)690	unidentified portrait
	WHi(V24)1927	portrait with beard
	WHi(V24)1872	W. T. Price memorial display
same page (left)	WHi(X3)25314	Wm. Tennant
same page (right)	WHi(V2)659	
same page (left)	WHi(X3)25312	standing
same page (right)	WHi(X3)25291	without orthopedic legs
detail	WHi(V2)674	two men
	WHi(V2)166	Quo Vadis posters
	WHi(V24)1929	James Bruce Carter
	WHi(V24)1946	unidentified portrait
	WHi(V24)1874	memorial display
	WHi(V2)1123	muscle building
Section 3	WHi(X3)25304	seated on logs
	WHi(V2)630	seated in hammocks
	WHi(V2)602	at the piano
	WHi(V24)2029	at the pump organ
	WHi(V24)1970	Mr. and Mrs. Best
detail	WHi(V24)1970	
	WHi(V24)1988	Mr. and Mrs. Olaf Olson
montage	WHi(V24)2134	house and family
	WHi(V24)2132	father and daughter
same page (left)	WHi(V24)2020	man with hat
same page (right)	WHi(V24)2020	family group
same page (left)	WHi(V24)1990	family portrait
same page (right)	WHi(V24)1990	two boys
	WHi(V24)1936	Charles Van Schaick and family
	WHi(V2)757	family group inside
	WHi(V24)2140	house and family
	WHi(V24)2143	house and family with dog
	WHi(V24)1986	mowing the lawn
	WHi(V24)2105	family of three
	WHi(V24)2104	Chas. Beehler homestead
	WHi(X3)25300	Joseph Olson family
	WHi(V24)2013	Bill Jax extended family
Chapter 1898	WHi(V24)1996	family portrait
detail	WHi(V24)1996	
	WHi(V24)1977	family with five children
detail	WHi(V24)1977	
	WHi(V24)1900	portrait with eight women
detail	WHi(V24)1900	
	WHi(V24)2094	youth group
	WHi(X24)1913	at the piano
	WHi(X3)25300	under the grape arbor
	WHi(X3)34635	couple with bouquet
	WHi(V24)2002	Chief Tom Thunder and wife
	WHi(V24)1916	portrait with seated man
	WHi(X3)25316	posed on steps
	WHi(V24)2038	couple in field
Chapter 1899	WHi(X3)25279	photo by Gerhard Gesell
	WHi(V2)1217	smoke lads
(reversed)	WHi(V2)1111	standing with oar
same page (left)	WHi(V24)2030	seated man
same page (right)	WHi(V24)2036	seated woman
	WHi(V22)1283	memorial wreath
	WHi(V2)1102	at river's edge

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ALONE...ON THE ICE
Narrative Strategies in Women's Figure Skating Competition Coverage

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When CBS decided to broadcast the 1992 Winter Olympics, one of "television's most prestigious events," (Tyrer, 1992, p. 18) the network invested $243 million for U.S. rights alone and then $100-$120 million more in production costs ("Paying for the Olympics," 1992, p. 12). The overwhelming notion within the industry was that the network was taking on too huge of a risk. CBS, covering the Winter Olympics after a 32-year absence, would not be able to sustain high enough ratings to actually make money out of the enormous 116-hour television event, predictors nagged. CBS would have to back down from their $250,000 30-second commercial rate. Perhaps the network wouldn't be able to sell out at all. Many speculated that CBS would fall far below ABC's solid Olympic ratings four years earlier in Calgary. In 1980, when the Winter Olympics were broadcast in real time from Lake Placid, New York, ratings were high. In 1984, when they were held overseas in Sarajevo, Yugoslavia -- seven hours ahead of American time and therefore tape-delayed -- the ratings were disastrously low. In 1988, when the Winter Olympics took place in Calgary, Canada, they were again broadcast live, and again generated high ratings. But in 1992, the Olympics were being held in Albertville France, another six hours time difference from American television audiences, and another potential for tape-delay disaster. At the end of the two-week broadcast marathon, however, CBS led the February sweeps so comfortably that, by most accounts, they were assured victory for the entire season. Said one glowing CBS executive, "we'd have to go dark for the rest of the season to lose" (Tyrer, 1992, Feb. 24,).

Why were ratings so high? The hockey team did better than expected but the rest of the events did not see a tumult of American success stories. As CBS executive Neal Pilson had remarked before coverage began, "we think the Olympics are the best dramatic entertainment programming we could find for February, and I have a lot of confidence that these Olympics are going to make good television" (Tyrer, 1992, Feb. 3). By successfully exploiting and capitalizing on the melodrama inherent in the Olympics, CBS turned every sport situation into a narrative that effectively competed with all the other dramas, theatricals, and specials showing on other networks and cable stations during those two weeks in February when everyone thought CBS would bomb.

This paper will analyze CBS coverage of the 1992 Winter Olympics and illustrate how the network employed narrative storytelling conventions to turn a tape-delayed sporting event into a full scale melodrama and ratings success. I will focus particularly on CBS' narrative coverage of the Women's Figure Skating Competition because this event has traditionally been the highlight of the Winter Olympics, and was easily CBS' most dramatized -- and most watched -- Olympic event in 1992. Described by CBS as "the hottest ticket in town" with "every seat in the auditorium filled," the Women's Skating Competition, before it even began, had all the implications of a Broadway musical sell-out. CBS was the leading storyteller of the Winter Olympics, but similar, supplementary narratives of the less immediate print media certainly enhanced the narrative process. "The popularity of the ladies' figs is special -- at the confluence of 'Little Women,' 'Pretty Woman,' and 'Designing Women,'" a *Newsweek* Winter Olympic preview remarked. "This year the women's skaters are more important than ever. There are no big, bad Communists for athletic jingoists to root against, and that tired lightning-in-a-bottle U.S. hockey miracle of the '80s games just cannot be dragged out and flogged again" (Deford, 1992, p. 46).

What makes the coverage of this event so interesting, however, is not necessarily the plethora of overlapping and underlying narratives that dramatized and popularized the sporting event, but the way in which these narratives comfortably and continually defined the skaters not as athletes, which is what they are, but as princesses: icons of feminine beauty fitting snugly into mass media's notion of who women are or should be. Narrative success -- translated into ratings success -- was thus contingent upon the network's ability to conform the 1992 crop of Olympic athletes into traditional and popular story lines. This paper will illustrate how the skaters' feminine identities are maintained by CBS and, as an outgrowth of CBS' television coverage, other mass media outlets. It will also demonstrate how, when the women were incongruous to the traditional ice-princess role, the mass media storytellers adapted by restructuring the narrative so that traditional constructs of femininity and the American ideal are still advanced as common sense.

THE NARRATIVE

According to the narrative theories posited by Kozloff (1987) and Deming (1991), narratives may be split into two parts; the "story," meaning "what happens to whom," and "the discourse," meaning "how the story is told."

The Story

In the case of the Women's Figure Skating Competition, the story is the course of the event itself: Five major competitors, Kristi Yamaguchi, Nancy Kerrigan, Tonya Harding (USA), Midori Ito (Japan) and Surya Bonaly (France) vying for a gold medal depending on how well they skate according to nine judges who monitor and grade their original programs. The event happens over a two-day period in an ice rink.

The Discourse

If the story is "what happens to whom," the discourse, then, is the manner which the story is interpreted and inflected through, in the case of CBS, the medium of television.

CBS sent a production crew of 800 to Albertville for the purpose of negotiating this Olympic discourse. Besides those operating the technical apparatuses -- the Sony D-2 VTRs, the Grass Valley Switchers, the video cameras, graphic effects, computer systems and two-way communication channels

(Tyrer, 1992, Feb. 3) -- CBS relied on directors, writers and producers to manipulate the story according to a specified alignment of ideas. They also relied on narrators to tell and interpret the story by establishing it intertextually within a certain historical, sociological, and psychological framework, translating episodes in the story for an implied American audience in terms of American mainstream ideology, or common sense.

The narrative process ended only when it reached a real audience who could then reinterpret the story interpretations and construct identities and realities from it. As Joan Didion describes this process, "we live by the imposition of a narrative line upon disparate images, by 'ideas' with which we have learned to freeze the shifting phantasmorgia which is our actual experience" (Didion, 1979, p. 11). Richard Campbell further suggests that "narrative enables us to make sense of our phantasmorgia because, in contrast to that experience, narrative is a familiar, concrete, and objectified structure. Narratives, then, are metaphors, shaping and containing the bodiless flow of experience within familiar boundaries of plot, character, setting, problem, resolution, and synthesis" (Campbell, 1991, p. 267).

If narratives are metaphors, the Women's Figure Skating Competition, a narrative with heroines, villains, character development and plot all motivated by the elaborate push and pull of cause and effect, is told through the metaphor of a fairytale. Kozloff notes that "American television is remarkably like Russian fairy tales -- that is, that certain motifs, situations and stock characters may have a nearly universal psychological/mythological/sociological appeal and thus appear again and again in popular cultural forms" (Kozloff, 1987, p. 49). Women's skating coverage, a romantic fairytale about dreams coming true, a determination to succeed against possible odds, and a fight against the villains (skating judges and the pestering media) using the skills available of grace, luck, courage, and family support, is only too evident as a narrative process filtering through CBS and all mass media outlets. The opening paragraph of a *Newsweek* Olympic cover story says as much: "Surely there must be a fairytale that fits here -- the lost Aesop, the only Grimm that didn't get optioned. It'd be the one about the two stylish, gorgeous creatures -- swans or butterflies, take your pick, competing against the stronger, more daring beings for the favor of the gods. And, of course, the stronger, more daring beings are certain to win, because, spectacular is always better ever after. Only, the stronger, more daring beings reach for too high a sky, hoist too heavy a load, cross too deep a river, and so the stylish, gorgeous creatures glide to victory -- and, probably here comes a handsome prince or two, as well" (Deford & Starr, 1992, p. 50).

The event is about skating, but just as much entails the physical image and behaviors of the competing women who are metaphorically defined within the narrative as princesses. American princesses compete to become the appointed American "darling." Princesses from every country compete for the "crown jewel" of the Olympic games. The narrative is especially satisfying when the media-appointed darling also wins the crown jewel as was the case in 1992; that's when dreams -- the American Dream -- comes true.

To comfortably couch the competition in terms of princess ideals, the Women's Figure Skating event is the only sports competition that has been identified by the mass media not as a women's event, but as a "ladies' event." The word "lady," implying high breeding, social grace and femininity, also implies a throwback to traditional attitudes regarding women's roles. When CBS' 1992 Olympic host and commentator Tim MacCarver remarks "Tonight the stage is set for the crown jewel of figure skating, the ladies' competition," he is not suggesting a competition, but a beauty pageant; attention is drawn to costumes and designer labels, "lovely" smiles and stylish allure. The notion of "Ladies' Night" in general suggests a night at a bar, traditionally a male domain, when women are invited in to be the centers of attention and receive drinks for free. If sports can be characterized as a male domain (and I think it can), "Ladies' Night" is the night -- the event -- where women as sports figures are invited into the bar by the sports industry and mass media and given the center of attention. "It is absolutely the only time," Frank Deford of *Newsweek* confirms, "when what women do matters more to fandom than what the male brutes manage" (1992, p. 46). The one condition, it seems, is that they fit prescribed ideals of femininity, and if they don't, they are not favored, but reconfigured in relation to feminine roles. The fairytale metaphor that outlines the Women's Figure Skating Competition coverage helps us shape the skating experience in terms, as Campbell suggests, of familiar boundaries. In deconstructing the way CBS' discourse emphatically confines women to the "familiar" role of princess, I hope to illustrate how these roles are, by their inflexible and unconditionally male perspective, degrading as well as repressive.

NARRATIVE'S HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Sonja Henie, who won her first gold at 14 in 1928 and went on to win two more in 1932 and 1936, was the first darling to be idolized beyond her technique by popular culture. Dubbed the Kewpie doll of the American public ("Sweet Life," 1968, p. 26), Henie transcended skating to star in Hollywood movies and "trailed only Shirley Temple and Clark Gable in box office draw" (Deford, 1992, p. 50). Then came American gold medalist Peggy Fleming (1968), "a raven haired Colorado College coed" ("The Olympics," 1968, p. 57). At the time of her gold medal win, *Newsweek* described Fleming as "a trim, 109-pound package that keeps its cool on and off the ice. A shy, Bambi-like teen-ager...the lithe, 5-foot 4-inch Peggy flows into her movements with the fragile grace of a Fonteyn." ("Peggy Fleming," 1968, p. 48-9). Although not yet plotted in terms of fairy tale roles, objectification as dolls and packages came easy to the media's earlier coverage of women figure skating athletes.

Other skaters before Fleming, including Henie, were known to use more muscular strokes (and consequently developed "linebacker leg") ("Peggy Fleming," 1968, p. 48). While Fleming was noted for her technical proficiency, she was also applauded for keeping her hair in place ("she buys cans of Sudden Beauty hair spray by the half-dozen") ("Peggy Fleming," 1968, p. 49) and for signing a $500,000 contract with NBC ("Sweet Life," 1968, p. 26). "She was always pretty, fragile and charming," a 1968 *Sports Illustrated* article reads, "a Dresden figurine performing tough school figures as though they were the easiest thing in the world. But the new Peggy Fleming is acquiring glamour -- superstar, Hollywood-style glamour. On November 24 the network will throw out "Bonanza" for an evening and launch its shining new star with an hour-long TV special" (p. 26).

It wasn't until 1976 when Dorothy Hamill won the gold medal that media coverage began to follow more complex narrative structures, and when skaters, besides representing beauty and commercial success, were interpreted in terms of princesses vying to ascend the throne. "Her jumps were high, her landings light, and she crackled with championship poise," read a *Sports Illustrated* article. "She had smoked them all off earlier in the compulsory school figures and her crown was secure" (Bruce, 1976, p. 24).

With the rise in television Olympic coverage, greater and greater network investment in the event, and large chunks of airtime to fill, coverage of "the most riveting spectacle for U.S. viewers" ("An Arcane Discipline," 1976, p. 61) became all the more crucial, and dramatic narratives all the more necessary. "With a dancer's sense of her own body, an incandescent smile and a skating style as fluid as a Chopin prelude, Dorothy will light up fans," *Time* said, echoing television's efforts to position Hamill as a captivating character: "The drama began as Dorothy, who battles almost uncontrollable jitters on the brink of each performance, waited at the end of the rink to be introduced for her free-skating program. As the points awarded to the previous skater flashed on a scoreboard, the crowd erupted in an explosion of boos and catcalls, protesting low scores. Dorothy thought they were jeering her, and her already fragile composure collapsed. In tears, she ran off the ice into her father's arms" (p. 61). Hamill's overall story, largely through television's manipulations, was such a compelling one that even Hamill's haircut became the most prominent hair fashion throughout the late seventies. With Hamill, woman-skater-as-princess had firmly become part of the media coverage narrative.

While 1980 and 1984 Olympic Skating Competitions saw no American champions, television's first real challenge in using the fairytale narrative came with the Debi Thomas/Katarina Witt event of 1988. Try as ABC and other media might, Thomas didn't allow herself to be characterized in the princess role. ABC ended up highlighting Witt, casting Thomas in many ways as anti-woman and anti-ideal: almost like a man. And Witt has been a commercial success in the U.S. ever since, while Thomas has disappeared from the public scene.

Thomas didn't fit the princess role on any level. First of all she was African-American, the first African-American woman ever to advance so far in figure skating, a characteristic that defied the white Northern European ideal. "In sport so subjective and judgmental, not to mention whiter than several shades of snow blindness, " *Time* admitted, "a black child might be excused for factoring in racism into indecipherable marks" (Callahan, p. 46). "In a world of lily white princess," remarked Ian Austen of *Macleans*, "Debi Thomas stands out." (Austen, 1988, p. 30). Thomas, a self-described tomboy who actually gave momentary consideration to playing hockey before taking up figure skating (Callahan, p. 46), was critical of figure skating, saying things like "I wasn't going to put the rest of my life on the line in front of some judges who might not like my yellow dress" (Callahan, p. 44). Callahan also described her as wrinkling her nose and batting her eyelashes sarcastically when purring "Figure skating is such a bea - u -ty sport" (p. 46).

Described in terms of "steely resolve," depicted lifting weights, unballing her fists and muttering to herself, Thomas was the intimidating "athlete" next to Witt's feminine, heart-stopping German seductress character portrayal. Because Thomas' strong, unique person was too much for the fairytale narrative to handle, she was positioned opposite Witt as artist vs. athlete, but also, very nearly as female (Witt) vs. male (Thomas). Witt languidly dreamed of success while Thomas had incredible drive, independence, and willpower (it was rarely mentioned that Witt was similarly driven). A pre-med student at Stanford, Thomas was portrayed driving across America in her Toyota and of having an "out of fashion perspective," implying that her lifestyle did not make common sense. While the princess narrative was stalwartly enforced through the feminine characteristics of Witt, Thomas was not only deglamorized, she was cast so out of touch that she was, in effect, marginalized from the media as inaccessible. In order to keep the narrative intact, American nationalism was abandoned early on and a woman from a Communist country was embraced.

Four years later in Albertville, CBS would exploit the by-now familiar fairytale narrative on a group of five women, expertly casting the characters for maximum dramatic display.

SPACE AS DISCOURSE

Thorburn refers to the use of space in melodrama as the place wherein most of us act out our deepest needs and feelings (Deming, 1991, p.251). The space in which the Women's Figure Skating Championship narrative is orchestrated is the ice rink, called the Halle de Glace, and is melodramatically significant on many levels of the narrative. First, the ice rink is the "battleground" on which the women skaters compete for the "crown jewel." Individual desires are pitted against individual desires; personalities, skating skills, fashion, and the emotional endurance to withstand competition and public pressure are also factors determining victory within the spatial construct of the ice arena. The battle, on many levels, is thus a battle against nerves; a theme that is enhanced by the assertion that these women are "alone, on the ice." "Alone on the ice," a male CBS commentator begins, over a mood montage that attempted to subjectively capture a skater's pre-skate nervousness. A camera follows her feet (in skates) as she walks through the cavernous passageway to the arena. A heartbeat sound completes the soundtrack as she gingerly steps onto the rink. "A lifetime of hard work. An Olympic dream begins tonight. 2 1/2 minutes on the ice, ALONE, as the world looks on." The heartbeat stops, the crowd cheers, and we see the face of Kristi Yamaguchi. Women, according to this theme, face a greater threat from skating alone than men, and thus need to summon up that much more courage. The battleground motif, then, translates into a commentary on traditional gender roles.

Other battles are taking place on a theoretical level, too: the battle over whether the sport is defined more by artistry or athleticism is manifested on the ice rink, with commentators arguing for or against the addition of the triple axel to determine which direction the sport is -- and should be -- going. Nationalistic battles embodying "the hopes of a nation" are played out as well. While one top contender, Surya Bonaly was the nationalistic hope for France, the host country, a more prominent battle featured Kristi Yamaguchi and Midori Ito, a Japanese-American vs. a Japanese. In regards to the political climate surrounding the 1992 Winter Olympics, the ice rink symbolized the battleground for two opposing countries who were falling out of each other's favor at the time.

Contrasting the battleground motif, the ice rink also represents a "stage" in the context of the Women's Figure Skating narrative. In this light the ice rink is a place for enjoyment, a coveted realm to which one feels privileged to have access. Focusing in on a close-up of a Women's Figure Skating Event ticket, the narrator (CBS' Verne Lundquist, wearing a tuxedo and reporting from the rink alongside Scott Hamilton) reveals that "in all of Albertville there's no more desirable ticket than the one you just saw." The emphasis, again, on the event's glamour, theatrics, music, and regalia, works in this narrative to dramatize the feminine qualities imposed on the sport. Another mood montage on the second night of programming featured each of the five stars swirling comfortably on the ice to the song "Wonderful Tonight" sung by Eric Clapton. As one image smoothly dissolves into the next, the lyrics read "it's late in the evening...she's wondering what clothes to wear...she'll put on her makeup...and brushes her long blond hair (Tonya Harding, who happened to be blond, skated by here). And then she'll ask me...do I look all right: And I'll say, yes, you look wonderful tonight, oh my darling you look wonderful tonight." Unlike a battleground, the stage is set for the appointed princess darlings to display their femininity for interpretations of the male perspective. To quote from Laura Mulvey, "in a world ordered by sexual imbalance, pleasure in looking has been split between active/male and passive/female. The determining male gaze projects its fantasy onto the female figure which is styled accordingly. In their traditional exhibitionist role women are simultaneously looked at and displayed, with their appearance coded for strong visual and erotic impact so that they can be said to connote to-be-looked-at-ness" (Mulvey, p. 62). In the space of the ice rink, the skater's attractiveness is measured, consequently, by their erotic appeal to men.

The competitors, we learn, can also enjoy the ice rink as a kind of home base. Parents sit in the stands, urging their daughters on, friends and coaches offer their support, and we even see in some instances that competitors befriend each other. The narrative even takes us behind the scenes, again, underneath the stands where competitors store their gear and pick up mail. Vast yet familiarized, the ice rink is a common ground for us to interpret who these women are, analyze their similarities and differences, and compare their experience to our own realities.

TIME AS DISCOURSE

Even though CBS was combatting the insecurity of tape-delayed programming, the Women's Figure Skating Competition appeared to be live. Deming remarks on television's capacity to project liveness, and on its ability to emphasis "the present tense and irreversible flow of time" (Deming, 1991, p. 249). CBS thrust its programming in the modes of anticipation and "continuous update" (Deming, 1991, p. 249) by imposing frequent live narration between the tape-delayed broadcast in order to maintain and dramatize the present. "There's going to be some tough competition out there on the ice tonight, some great jumpers, some great artists," announces Paula Zahn, who is live, incidentally, but comments on dated material. Zahn then hands off commentary from her comfortable living room studio (where she co-hosts Olympic coverage with Tim MacCarver) to Verne Lundquist and Scott Hamilton, the CBS announcers in the Halle de Glace. "There are empty seats in the stadium right now because it's early in the competition..." Lundquist says. As the Women's Figure Skating Competition flows in chronological order, each skater performs her routine while anticipation and speculation rivets the programming forward. "Well, Kristi Yamaguchi, Tonya Harding and Midori Ito have been in the spotlight, but when considering the Ladies' competition here, don't dismiss the medal capabilities of Nancy Kerrigan, the elegant young skater from New England." These announcements, notes Deming, "remind the audience that the fiction is part of television's segmented flow, the flow that continues whether the set is on or not and whether the viewer watches or not" (Deming, 1991, p. 249).

The screen duration of each skater's routine is only 2 1/2 minutes for the first night and 4 1/2 minutes for the second night. To fill inevitable "lag time," CBS manipulated the temporal order by imposing prerecorded, preedited flashbacks in the form of documentary pastiches detailing moments in skaters' pre-competition lives. Instead of watching Kristi Yamaguchi skate around the rink during her allotted 6 1/2 minutes of warm up we are taken back six months earlier to relive the moment when she selects the music for her original routine and meets with a seamstress who fits her for a costume. Inadvertently illustrating how much the event relies upon appearance, we even learn how much the costume is going to cost. In another lull between 2 1/2 minute routines (and of course, commercials) we are taken to Massachusetts for a flashback visit with Nancy Kerrigan's mother who admits that "it was such a relief that Nancy stopped playing hockey with her brothers...you're a girl...let the boys play hockey and you can do girl things!" A 20-minute episode from CBS' *60 Minutes* is also casually inserted documenting Midori, "famous violinist" in relation to Midori, "famous skater." Morley Safer, in what is meant to be a poignant moment, asks the two hardworking, individualistic women if they think about marriage at all. They both confirm that they do. This question serves to bring the two aggressively independent women back into the "common sense" realm of aspiring wives.

"One means by which T.V. narratives compensate for their lack of suspense," writes Kozloff, "is by proliferating story lines...proliferating story lines diffuse the viewers interest in any one line of action and spread the interest over a large field" (Kozloff, 1987, p. 51-2). Time to fill made the proliferation of story lines necessary during the Women's Figure Skating Competition, but also worked to expand the narrative's spatial orientation, stimulate sympathy and recognition for the narrative's characters, and, in this case, continually orient them in terms of their princessy characteristics: poise and femininity.

CHARACTERS AS DISCOURSE

According to Bordwell & Thompson, "the conception of narrative depends on the assumption that the action will spring primarily from individual characters" (Bordwell and Thompson, 1990, p. 70). Although the five major competitors in the Women's Figure Skating Competition are real people (competing in a real event) they are conditioned and defined through the text to inhabit a narrative framework and their language, related through camera shots, editing, body language, even costume, is consequently interpreted. For CBS and other mass media outlets covering the event, the characters are revealed not so much through skating abilities, but through their ability to embody feminine, almost virginal qualities, and relate these qualities to their media-imposed role. "Although athletic figures appearing on the performance plane are the main focus of attention in the sports arena," notes Reeves, "their actions are interpreted and filtered by broadcast professionals and sports experts speaking on the presentational plane" (Reeves, 1989, p. 209). Here is how the mass media depicted/cast the top five princesses:

1. Kristi Yamaguchi (USA), the appointed American darling of the event, the one who embodies the "hopes of the nation," is 21 years old, five feet tall, 93 pounds, and above all exquisitely graceful. A *Newsweek* article goes as far as describing the skater as "absolutely petite, a size 1, 93 pounds [measurements are a common descriptive device], Yamaguchi is cut high, with a Betty Boop mouth and two beauty marks wonderfully positioned under her left eye and lips" (Deford, 1992, Feb. 10 p. 51). A Japanese-American, Yamaguchi comes from Fremont, California where her father is a dentist (her mother's occupation is unknown, and is not considered important, as is the fact that both her parents were interned in Japanese camps during WWII). As the story goes, the skater used to be a pairs dancer and was formerly considered an athletic skater, but suddenly "developed" a very welcome gush of grace. "In the ensuing four years she had grown from a giggly 16-year-old to a young woman capable of expressing romantic elegance in the tiniest hand gestures or turns of the head," Phil Hersh observed in the *Chicago Tribune* (Hersh, 1992, Feb. 22 p. 8). Her artistry compensates for her inability to hit a triple axel like two other women skaters, in fact, as CBS' Zahn pointed out, "her strength is that she can combine artistry with athleticism." Striking a non-extremist, non-threatening persona because of her ability to mediate (between art and athleticism, between Japan and America), Yamaguchi was also consistently labeled with the word "focused." As CBS sideline commentator and former men's figure skating champion (1984) Scott Hamilton phrased it, "her concentration is really incredible, that's the key to her consistency." "She's simply on a different level," wrote Frank Deford in *Newsweek*, so elegantly dressed, gliding so stylishly, seamlessly, weaving her moves naturally to the music" (Deford & Starr, 1992, p. 50).

2. Midori Ito (Japan), the Japanese "hope" and main rival to Yamaguchi, is characterized as "stout, little Midori," (Deford, 1992, Feb. 10, p. 51). She is 22 years old, 4 feet 7 inches, 98 pounds, and comes from Nagoya, Japan, where she lives with her coach (an adopted mother after her parents were divorced). Known as "the jumper" and the first woman ever to hit a triple axel, Ito is short, with "powerful legs bowed in an old-fashioned way, what the Japanese once called, unkindly to their women, *daikon* legs, after the archipelago's big, squat radishes" (Deford, 1992, Feb. 10, p. 51). If the word daikon is unkind to women, what better way to resurrect this unkindness than by dragging it out and relabeling Ito with daikon legs in another context? She is not graceful like Yamaguchi ("her powerful legs can never allow her the exquisiteness of her Japanese-American rival") (Deford and Starr, 1992, March 2, p. 52) but Ito's saving grace is that she's sweet, friendly and self-deprecating, approximating, but not quite living up to the perfect princess. Ito, the narrative relates, is actually envious of Yamaguchi's looks, although it's not a malicious sort of envy. The skater "won the hearts of the skating world" when she collided with the camera stands during a world championship a year earlier, got back up, and finished her program. This "courageous" character also has difficulty withstanding pressure, however. "This morning she was surrounded by cameras and was missing combinations," CBS' Scott Hamilton remarked, " I think it's taking its toll."

3. Nancy Kerrigan (USA), 22 years old and from Stoneham, Massachusetts, despite her third place finish in the event and nowhere near the skating ability of Yamaguchi, was characterized as the Peggy Fleming of the 90s (Fleming won the *gold* in 1968 and is still fondly hailed as the most preeminent American darling). In other words, Kerrigan, and not Japanese-American gold medal prospect (and winner) Yamaguchi, had in many ways secured the American darling media label, a characterization supplemented by notes on her physical appeal. While Yamaguchi was characterized as graceful, Kerrigan was beautiful. "This original program is mature and sophisticated," went CBS' Lundquist and Hamilton's program commentary," (Kerrigan completes a jump)...that brings a radiant smile from the lovely lady......she has such an elegant presence about her, and then to skate so well...it's amazing that someone could combine such technical ability with such beauty in her skating...what a gorgeous appearance in the free skate..." "Kerrigan, whom many think is the sport's most elegant skater, wound up with the bronze because the nerves could not be tamed," wrote Hersh in a post-event analysis implying that, had her nerves been in control, Kerrigan could have snagged the gold she somehow deserved (1992, Feb. 22, p. 4).

Idealized because, unlike Yamaguchi, Kerrigan is of Northern European descent and physically resembles the fair-skinned, western-oriented princess image mass media has imposed on the Women's Figure Skating Competition, she embodies everything therefore, an ideal woman should be: white, Peggy Fleming-elegant, with technical skill to compensate for a lack of athletic ability. Approximating a New England Cinderella with a welder father and a legally blind mother, Kerrigan, more than any other skater, was a rags-to-riches beauty who was all too ready for a prince. Strategically dressed in wedding white, her image on the ice, while not convincingly athletic *or* artistic, was certainly read as virginal. Kerrigan's character was further glamorized through a tangential story detailing her adolescence in Stoneham, Massachusetts. In a mini-documentary during CBS' main coverage, we learn that Kerrigan, who grew up playing hockey with her brothers, was very nearly "a tomboy." The story details her femininization into the "elegant beauty" Kerrigan is today, a story posited as common sense. CBS and other media coverage couldn't applaud Kerrigan's princess qualities enough.

As a consequence, the Women's Figure Skating Competition as a sports event is forgotten; the real competition for the mass media is the competition for elegance, sophistication and poise, and on this level, Kerrigan wins the gold. Kerrigan, too, a character prone to the tears and nerves of femininity, fits the ideal even more by publicly applauding the role beauty plays in the sport. "Women's Skating should be pretty and graceful as well as athletic," Kerrigan was quoted as saying. "It's always been known as a glamour sport. That's what makes it nice to watch" (Hersh, 1992, Feb. 22, p. 1). A heavy endorsement on beauty, according to the sport's "most beautiful," makes perfect common sense.

4. Tonya Harding (USA), 21, the third American contender (from Portland, Oregon) and in the beginning a definite contender for the gold medal, was not given the status of a main character in CBS and print coverage of the Women's Figure Skating Competition. For necessary narrative variation, Harding was cast early on as reckless, shattered and thoughtless. Coverage more or less blamed Harding for arriving in France only two days before the competition and for consequently suffering from jetlag. In one CBS update we learn that Harding's late arrival was due to her weakness for being "a homebody," hardly a characteristic for a princess. *Newsweek* noted that, because Harding wasn't even punctual for practice, missing part of her music session, she was "a victim more to her own careless and desultory ways...it was hardly any surprise, then, that she missed her triple axels on both Wednesday and Friday. She was lucky to sneak into fourth place" (Deford and Starr, 1992, p. 52). "Harding was fat and undertrained," a *Sports Illustrated* article criticized. "She did lose nine pounds and eventually resumed skating, but Harding seems to think she has all the answers in her 21-year-old head" (Swift, 1992, p. 19). Blond, ponytailed, and an athletic skater with -- like Ito -- a triple axel in her repertoire, CBS and print coverage consistently neglected to portray Harding in terms of American darling superlatives. Rather, Harding was characterized as a princess in desperate need of redemption, as if she was morally repugnant somehow, through no real fault of her own. Her depiction as a "tainted" character was even further maintained with unsympathetic reports of her "problem marriage" that hinted towards a physically abusive husband. Princesshood, and thus the mass media feminine ideal, was clearly contingent upon sexual availability and uprighteousness; marriage, like athleticism, it seems, spoils the path to the castle in the sky.

5. Surya Bonaly (France), 18, was an intriguing figure that rounded up the princess five, although more than any other character, she was presented as the villain in some ways, and was therefore carefully distanced, like Harding, from "the fairest of them all." Another "athlete" (she preceded her

skating career with gymnastics), Bonaly was originally from the Island of Reunion in the Indian Ocean but had been adopted by two white parents, who gave her an Indian first name (meaning sun). Oozing multinationality, Bonaly was too far from white, Western, American darling status to be easily interpreted by the media as true princess material. She was therefore cast as the anti-princess, an event spoiler with poor judgement, like Harding, but with the added dose of pernicious intent. Back flips are not allowed as legitimate jumps in the Olympics, but during a morning warm up Bonaly performed a flip -- supposedly part of her usual warm up routine -- while Ito practiced to her music. The crowd applauded, Ito lost her concentration, and the media narrative turned into a lambasting of Bonaly for her calculating role in destablizing Ito. Grace, poise, and above all, modesty, were all implied to be beyond Bonaly; her ability to even dress decently became a factor in her character's anti-princess configuration. Outfitted in sequins by fashion designer Christian Lacroix, Bonaly's costumes were translated into some kind of joke. A *Newsweek* article compared them to "outfits that appeared to come from a garage sale at Hugh Hefner's mansion," a portrayal that, if anything, managed to denounce Bonaly's style and sexuality as pornographic and therefore non-pristine (Deford and Starr, 1992, p. 52). While Bonaly got high skating marks, she was nevertheless characterized as a resolute, conniving jumping jack who "stalked the ice rather than addressed it" (Deford & Starr, 1992, p. 52). Critical attention was even given to Bonaly's mother who visibly argued with Bonaly's coach, suggesting where Bonaly's "bad manners" originated (mom). Bonaly's mother could be easily contrasted with Kerrigan's mother, responsible for pushing Kerrigan towards the "right direction;" an ideal mother for an ideal princess.

"What appeals to the sports audience," Deford argues from his irrefutably male, mass-media standpoint, "is whatsoever is most beautiful, whatsoever is most lovely, whatsoever is most sexy. In Europe, anyway, by far the most popular photograph of any skater in recent years is not of anybody jumping, but of Witt coming completely out of the top of her outfit after a simple spin" (Deford, 1992, p. 50). Gymnastics, the only other women's sport that factors in artistry, music, and the subjectivity of judges, is dominated by 14-year-old girls, not quite in the realm of sexual desirability. "'Look," wails one panicky official when the dreaded comparison with gymnastics is uttered, "ninety percent of our girls are attractive, and they all have breasts" (Deford, Feb. 10, p. 50). Women's Figure Skating is so easily welcomed into the sports world -- and the real world -- as a premier jewel in sports events because the beauty contest/fairy tale metaphor through which it is explained is non-threatening to the largely uncontested constructs of gender roles in our society. What may already be a physical disadvantage for the more athletic skaters -- non-elegance, which is neither rewarded by sports judges nor the mass media -- is also a media tool and narrative ploy used to judge a skater's moral character. Character similarities and differences within the narrative helped outline a whole array of narrative judgements that motivated the narrative structure. The top five skaters may all have been princesses, but some were more adept at the role than others.

The theme of elegance and beauty, while the most salient overall in this fairy-tale like event interpretation, was not the only thematic device CBS and the print media drew upon to enhance women skater's roles as princesses. Princesses dream, and when one of them gets a medal, her dream has then come true. This concept of dreaming for success, a passive undertaking, absolves these women (as ideal women) from ambition and drive, characteristics the mass media traditionally award to the male realm. "I asked her this week if she had dreamt about going to the Olympics," a CBS interviewer said before the broadcast turned to a taped interview. "I haven't had a dream about podiums or medals, but I have dreamed about the performance," Yamaguchi said. "How does the dream come out?" Yamaguchi said she didn't know. Phil Hersh of the *Chicago Tribune* also quotes Yamaguchi as saying "I dreamed of it since I was a little girl and I first put on skates. That it is true is still sinking in." (Powers, 1992, p. 41). Now that it has sunk in, Kristi Yamaguchi is now the "embodiment of a million little girls' dreams," (Hersh, 1991, p. 1) and for the entire nation, an embodiment of the American Dream.

Close ties with family and strong family values were also, as illustrated by CBS and derivative print narratives, a factor in representing ideal feminine roles, but along with a preoccupation on firm family bonds came an emphasis on a skater's dependency -- somehow being childlike and under continuing maternal influence was contingent to maintaining a feminine identity. Yamaguchi's "focused" face was constantly juxtaposed with her mother's nervous expressions in a CBS interplay of concern and doting, dramatizing the feeling of risk at being "alone, on the ice." Backstage, as Yamaguchi waits with her coach, a close-up reveals that they are holding hands. Her skating is even referred to as childlike (Swift, 1992, p. 20) and when she's "alone, on the ice," or holding hands with her coach she's "wringing her hands like a school girl." An entire narrative subplot was devoted to Kerrigan's family, too, the mother of whom is legally blind; with her face two inches away from a rink-side television set (gallantly supplied by CBS) she could just make out Kerrigan's figure...but alas, would never be able to see just how *beautiful* her daughter really was. CBS carefully documented Kerrigan's "special" relationship with her mother, reiterating a few times how it was her mother who steered her away from becoming a permanent tomboy and pushed her towards figure skating, "where girls belong." CBS also glamorized the Kerrigan family, with two boys and one girl, as a healthy American nuclear family (the network's subtle testament to its success), showing them frequently embracing each other on close-ups and love pouring all around. The success of American individualism was also sneaking into the narrative; here a working class family, Massachussetts dialects and all, could work hard, sacrifice, and clearly see the riches.

STRUCTURE AS DISCOURSE

While action in a narrative is motivated by individual characters, and while these actions and characters somehow connect with the flux of fairytale myth, that shifting flux needs to be organized within a narrative framework, a categorization of human experience. According to structuralist Claude Levi-Strauss, we explain experiences by casting them in terms of binary oppositions; male/female, sacred/profane, pure/impure, in/out, kin/other, and nature/culture (Mukerji & Schudson, 1991, p. 19). By defining data and experience into two-dimensional dualistic categories (Campbell, 1992) we create a dramatic tension that subsequently calls for a resolution. "Characters must be distinguished, environments delineated, different times and activities established. All the differences are simple oppositions" (Bordwell & Thompson, 1991). Narrative construction for the Women's Figure Skating Competition follows the same pattern: a structure is first imposed through a series of binary oppositions and then a way is offered for those oppositions, or narrative tensions, to be resolved.

Figure skating, by its very nature as an event that straddles two separate worlds -- sport and musical theatre -- seems particularly vulnerable to binary oppositional configurations: athlete vs. artist, strength vs. grace, match vs. show and jump vs. dance. While the women figure skaters all demonstrated many different levels of technical and aesthetic ability, they were neatly packaged into two separate polarized camps and paired accordingly: Kristi Yamaguchi, artist vs. Midori Ito, athlete, Nancy Kerrigan, artist vs. Tonya Harding, athlete, with Surya Bonaly remaining the token "wild card" athlete. Even though Yamaguchi and Kerrigan were legitimate athletes -- Yamaguchi ironically had been labeled "athlete" in past events -- their artistry, as well as Harding's and Ito's athleticism, was reconfigured so that the dualistic tension, and narrative pattern, was more or less intact. While it was clear at the beginning of the event that "artist" and "athlete" had equal chances for the gold medal (Ito and Harding had both worked up impressive 3 1/2 rotation axel jumps) a failure to successfully complete the terrifically difficult jump throughout the course of the narrative put the "artists" at an advantage. Narrative tension between athlete and artist was subsequently resolved then, with the artists -- the more feminine -- coming out on top. "Favoring the artistic over the athletic," CBS Verne Lindquist said, "we saw Tonya Harding and Midori Ito lose an edge. But it was really a night to admire the artistic...the beauty of Nancy Kerrigan, the joy of her Mom and Dad, and the exquisite style and grace of Yamaguchi." For artistry to outshine athleticism, and for that "victory" to be shaped in terms of common sense, traditional feminine roles in sport (and life) were being enforced.

The validity of figure skating as sports' legitimate glamor event was also endorsed. The final resolution confirmed the preference for artistry, but warned that athleticism would be back again in four years, firmly reorienting figure skating in the sport world and implanting an ongoing tension that a day can still come when brawnier, bulkier women jumpers, or braver, younger, more energetic skaters will become adept at leaping and bounding but will falter in sex appeal, steering the sport away from its sports industry podium. Ironically, it was television that shaped the tension between art and athleticism from the start. When compulsory figure 8s were an event standard, the technically meticulous skater usually won the event. After networks pressured the skating world to abolish the mandatory figures (making for better television) the sport's emphasis went into jumping (Deford, 1992, Feb. 10, p. 50). "If the main criterion becomes jumps," Deford sadly warns, "if the athleticism overwhelms the elegance, then the women risk those lethal direct comparisons that have compromised the popularity of all other women's sports" (p. 51).

Deford is implying that if the figure skating narrative changes from princess to athlete, the story won't be as popular anymore.

While the athlete vs. artist dichotomy motivates much of the narrative, male/female binary opposition in the Women's Figure Skating narrative is as prevalent. Women figure skaters had "pluck and luck" while their male counterparts had "steely resolve." Women took brave chances -- as Ito did when she finally succeeded in landing a triple axel ("She's such a charming young woman, and when your confidence is gone and you can hit a triple axel like that...amazing...what unbelievable courage"); men thought intelligently and acted on their keen minds. Women dreamed of success, and men exhibited the extraordinary determination to drive themselves towards success. Women wobbled, struggled, fell on their "bottoms" and scrambled to get up, while men lost their balance. Women were frilly pretty vessels and men wore armor for battle. And for women, looks were considered as much, if not more, than technique in every character portrayal. For men, personality was sometimes considered, but looks were not a factor at all.

These gender categories were enhanced by CBS' visual choices. Because the women skaters' femininity was, if anything, magnified, the idea that jumps put a woman in amazing danger followed suit and was dramatized with corresponding images. Announcers oooohed when a woman skater fell, and the emphasis on falling was broadcast from so many different angles that the impact was all the more greater, as was the orchestrated tension between male and female. The message, of course, was that women shouldn't be jumping high -- they'll hurt themselves. Falling, clearly the most dramatic mistake for men and for women, had greater story line implications for women.

While male and female figure skaters may have been couched in terms of binary oppositions, the automatic assumption that they would be paired in romantic character relationships (e.g., fairytale/prince/princess narrative development) is too hasty. As Frank Deford of *Newsweek* notes, the male figure skaters, quite unlike the women, have "what is euphemistically called an image problem," and goes on to relate how homosexual men have been tacitly associated with the sport and how men's figure skating is somehow "sissy" (Deford, 1992, Feb. 10, p. 53). These homophobic notions surely influenced CBS' attention in shaping men's figure skaters in terms of more "masculine" characteristics, and, conversely, overcompensating on the feminine side, keeping gender roles -- and sexual orientations -- firmly intact within the boundaries of traditional (conservative) American values.

Male figure skaters may be masculine, but they certainly weren't the princes in the Women Skating Competition narrative. CBS has instead configured princes in the form of hockey players. Nancy Kerrigan, it was noted earlier, was "saved" from playing hockey with her brothers in order to acquiesce to her true feminine role as beautiful princess. We also learned in a calculated CBS subplot that Kerrigan appeared as a Russian figure skater opposite an American hockey player in a 1988 television commercial, depicting a "romantic Cold War moment." While the U.S. hockey players in CBS' overall Olympic narrative functioned as macho heroes who nearly duplicated the glorious winning moments of 1980, and while Kerrigan, and to a lesser degree, Yamaguchi were featured as true princesses, Kerrigan's television commercial was testimony to the underlying narrative at work: the most "elegant and beautiful skater" in the Olympics and the most white, the most Northern European, and the "fairest of them all" was implicitly and contextually matched with the vigorous masculinity of an American hockey player waiting, somewhere, in the dreamy sidelines of the plot. This narrative subplot, built up primarily on oppositions, was the actual plot for a movie, *The Cutting Edge* (MGM, 1992), which was heavily promoted during the Olympics -- another indication of evident underlying male/female figure skater/hockey player sexual tension and story line. "When the best hockey player in the US retired, and America's sweetheart [figure skater] lost her edge," the promo read, "someone set them up on the ultimate blind date." As women figure skaters are characterized in relation to their physical and sexual appeal (based on traditional white male values), they are also characterized in relation to men. The narrative construct of masculinity in the Olympics, it seems, is a subject worthy for a whole other paper.

The one narrative binary opposition which was initially encouraged and then subtly dropped was the U.S. vs. Japan dichotomy. The 1992 Winter Olympics were broadcast at a point in time when activities like Toyota sledgehammering were popular American news events. The binary opposition proved too difficult to maintain, however, due to Yamaguchi's American-Japanese background and what may be considered the touchy subject of American guilt over Japanese internment camps in which Yamaguchi's families were detained. This opposition slid comfortably into the secure non-political realm of artist vs. athlete and lean vs. stout. Had Ito triple-axeled her way to the gold instead of Yamaguchi, perhaps there would have been more narrative opposition between the two skaters, and certainly a more problematic message to sift through.

CONCLUSION

Despite the high stakes, CBS was overwhelmingly successful in their broadcast of the 1992 Olympics. "The projections look like we will exceed Calgary," said CBS senior vice president David Poltrack, of Olympic ratings results. "The Olympics stands alone as being the thing that's getting people to come to television, and I think we're seeing a lot of multiset viewing," CBS senior vice president George Schweitzer added. "Anytime anything in network television does better than something four years ago, that's an extraordinary situation," Poltrack said (Tyrer, 1992, Feb. 17, p. 4).

The success of CBS, I would argue, was in the way the network told its stories and, in the case of Women's Figure Skating, couched that story in the already familiar narrative of fairytale, a story line based on, and perpetuating myths. Hartley states that "myths allow a society to use factual or fictional characters and events to make sense of its environment, both physical and social. They endow the world with conceptual values which originate in their language" (Hartley, 1982, p. 30). Campbell adds that "myth provides a logical model in the form of a narrative structure that resolves abstract conflicts such as life and death, good and evil, tradition and change, and nature and culture. Mythic narratives mediate their own constructed tensions and allow a culture to come to terms with contradiction and ambiguity" (Campbell, 1991, p. 266). But according to Barthes, myth also has "an imperative, buttonholing character: stemming from an historical concept, directly springing from contingency" (Barthes, 1987, p. 39). And if anyone was buttonholed in the Olympics, it was the women in the Figure Skating Competition.

Coverage of women figure skaters shifted from merely celebrating and emphasizing women's grace and looks to fabricating detailed narratives factoring the women as princesses in a modern life fairytale/myth who dreamed their way to the throne. Television, in 1984, changed the nature of women's figure skating by pressuring the sport to abolish the compulsory school figures and as a consequence, pushed creativity within the sport towards higher and more difficult jumps. The move not only invited more athleticism, but created more narrative opposition and thus a stronger narrative debate as to the way ideal women should continually be defined, in the sport itself as well as in everyday life. If skaters are more athletic and independent, like women in all nontraditional sports, they are disfavored, and often the targets of unfair speculation. "Since the stereotype of female athlete and lesbian share so-called masculine traits such as aggression and independence, the association between sport and lesbianism has frequently been made," (Lenskyj, 1984, p. 66). If skaters are more artistic, they receive unqualified approval for their grace and femininity. "Typically, the marital status of female athletes, together with the commentator's assessment of their heterosexual attractiveness, receive more media attention than their sporting performance. Women are more likely than men to be shown in decorative or non-functional roles, and if passive heterosexual attractiveness is portrayed as the only acceptable expression of female sexuality, there is little validation in advertising for alternative sexual images based on strength, assertiveness and independence," (Whannel, 1984, p. 30) or for that matter, ethnic/racial makeup.

Like all other American gold medalists, winning the event through grace and artistry, and being characterized as the leading feminine ideal, has been translated into commercial success. "A gold medalist in figure skating is marketable for 10 or 20 years" (Muller & Braunstein, 1992. p. 4F). In fact, the 1976 gold medalist Dorothy Hamill was seen in commercials throughout the 1992 CBS coverage promoting "Healthy Choice" meat products. Since Yamaguchi won the gold, however, analysts have commented on the remarkably few endorsements she has been receiving. One such commentary quoted Yamaguchi's agent on whether ethnicity was a factor in the number of endorsements. "Certainly," Saegusa says, "no company or ad agency has told her they don't want Yamaguchi because she's Japanese-American. Yet that's exactly the suggestion being made by plenty of people. We've heard it on national TV and radio, including NPR, and read it in national business magazines. And we agree. Her lack of commercial deals certainly smacks of racism" (Muller & Braunstein, 1992, p. 4F). Kerrigan, on the other hand, has had healthy commercial success modeling for magazines, clothing catalogues (Chadwicks of Boston), and numerous advertisement appearances, such as the highly publicized Northwestern Airlines "We love to fly and it shows" series and Reebok's "Planet Reebok" ads. Yamaguchi wasn't portrayed as a true feminine ideal by CBS and Olympic coverage (Kerrigan was), because although she was "graceful," she was not "beautiful." Besides having an amazing power in defining figure skating, sports in general, and attitudes about women, mass media portrayals of women as ideals or non-ideals may have prolonged and unfortunate impacts on skaters' professional lives. In the year following the Olympics, Yamaguchi disappeared into (or submitted to) the world of "pro" skating, and was quickly forgotten. Perhaps, without further funding, going "pro" was her only choice. Kerrigan, laden with endorsements, was able to continue in the "amateur" arena, was rapidly labled "the queen of the ice," and skates, with great mediocrity, in the limelight.

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Covering Ethics: Evidence of its Emergence as a Beat and an Argument for Its Inclusion as News

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250-Word Abstract

Covering Ethics:
Evidence of its Emergence as a Beat
and an Argument for its Inclusion as News

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August 1993

This paper uses interviews and examples to describe an emerging trend to cover ethics in the print media, particularly as an expansion of the religion beat. In addition to a handful of columnists who routinely write on the topic of ethics, this unsystematic study found that several papers have included stories with an ethical subject on religion pages, and some newspapers have renamed religion sections to include the word ethics. However, the paper did not find evidence that the trend has extended to include coverage of ethics in the media, despite a few recent, prominent examples such as the case of NBC's rigged truck tape or the disclosure that Arthur Ashe had AIDS. As further evidence, the paper found in a review of eight elite newspapers indexed by Newspaper Abstracts that articles classified as ethics and indexed between 1987 and 1992 increased overall by 44.5 percent, although the number of total articles in the index dropped by 12.2 percent.

The paper further argues that coverage of ethics in general is both ethically valid for journalists and that the ideology of journalism compels such coverage. Specifically, the paper focuses on the notion of news values, the concept of social responsibility, and the ideal of news objectivity and thoroughness.

Covering Ethics:
Evidence of its Emergence as a Beat and an Argument for its Inclusion as News

When NBC admitted it had rigged a General Motors truck to explode on impact, stories condemning the staged event appeared in newspapers, newsmagazines and on television. "Scandal prods journalists to re-examine ethics," read one headline at the time.[1] And in one of two front-page stories on the ordeal, *The Wall Street Journal* referred to NBC as "embarrassed."[2]

Such published accounts about journalistic ethics are only the most recent examples of the profession's public disclosure about its practices. A similar public chastising of journalists' behavior by other journalists followed revelations in April 1992 that the now-late tennis great Arthur Ashe had AIDS, despite Ashe's desire that his deadly disease not be revealed publicly.[3] In Ashe's case, it was the issue of the press invading Ashe's privacy that took center stage, particularly because several journalists already knew of Ashe's disease, but had kept silent. As one columnist noted:

> Once the shock wore off, this issue of privacy came to the fore – more so, for example, than how much Ashe's presence might help the cause of AIDS. USA Today's defense – joined by some other editors – was that their reportorial process of trying to confirm the report with Arthur was impeccable. And so it was; so are we all, all honorable men. But to Ashe, and to a public that rushed to his side, bureaucratic niceties are not the issue here; morality and sensitivity are. It matters little to most of us that he was violated by a sterile instrument.[4]

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[1] Bill Patterson, "Scandal Prodes Journalists to Re-examine Ethics," column appearing in *The Columbus Dispatch*, February 22, 1993.

[2] "Tale of the Tape: How GM One-Upped An Embarrassed NBC On Staged News Event," *The Wall Street Journal*, Feb. 11, 1993. See also, "NBC News President Burned by Staged Fire and GM, Will Resign," *The Wall Street Journal*, March 2, 1993.

[3] Among the more thoughtful pieces was Alex S. Jones' discussion of fears that the Ashe story will prompt efforts to legislate the press. See, "News Media Sharply Divided on When Right to Know Becomes Intrusion," *The New York Times*, April 30, 1992.

[4] Frank DeFord, "Arthur Ashe's Secret," *Newsweek*, April 20, 1992, pp. 62-63.

The Ashe story was not the first in 1992 to cause editors to ponder aloud the decisions that go into choosing what to print and what not to print. Gennifer Flowers and the "scandal-a-day" that plagued now President Bill Clinton in the early weeks of his campaign also drew scrutiny the public could read about.[5] And the 1990s began with reports of R. Foster Winans' abuse of his influence on stock prices with his "Heard on the Street" column in the *Wall Street Journal*, in which he sold information about what companies would appear in the column. Winans' transgressions have become almost as notorious as Janet Cooke's phoney Pulitzer-winning story at *The Washington Post* a decade earlier.[6]

Readers also received an inside view of the ethical quandaries journalists face when, in Spring 1991, the *Orange County Register* published a one-time special section called "Tough Choices." The section included the topics of controversial photos, using unnamed sources, and reporting suicides, among others. The 10-page section explained to readers the paper's reasons for decisions in theses areas and invited readers to respond with their own judgements of what was right and wrong. About 150 readers obliged.[7]

But the media's introspection in the above examples is notable in part because of its rarity. Although journalism students and educators spend courses debating the ethics used to make news judgements, and although these debates, perhaps miraculously, actually do exist in newsrooms as well, the nation's daily newspapers do little actual coverage of ethics as a beat or as an aspect of stories on other beats. The infrequency of stories in the news about ethics has existed regardless of whether or not it is ethics of other disciplines or of media ethics.

If a study is made of coverage of ethics in general, however, there might be signs of a slow but emerging trend toward increased coverage. Looking only at the coverage of media ethics, the evidence is slim. If the search is extended to coverage of ethics in all disciplines, though, there are signs of subtle, slow changes at some newspapers and news magazines to view ethics as a topic for coverage.

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[5] For examples see "Surviving the Smear: One Woman's Story," in *Newsweek*, February 10, 1992, p. 26-27, and "Meet the Press: Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde," in *The New York Times*, February 9, 1992.

[6] Richard Morin, "Newsroom Ethics: How Tough is Enforcement," *Journal of Mass Media Ethics*, 2 (Fall/Winter 1986-87):7-16.

[7] Dan Bolton, "Tough Choices at Orange County Register," *The Quill*, November/December 1991, p. 32.

This paper will use anecdotes, interviews and examples to describe this emerging trend of increased coverage of ethics as a beat in the print media. It will also argue that coverage of ethics should include the ethical decisions and processes used by the press. As such, it is not a quantitative study but an initial discussion about a developing practice that has received little or no discussion so far. The arguments used in this paper to encourage increased coverage of ethics as a beat are not original, but generally have been used to argue for increased ethical behavior among journalists, rather than as a justification for increased coverage of ethics. Thus, this topic, based on the interviews and evidence presented here, obviously requires further, more systematic study.

Ethics: The Elusive But Not Invisible Beat

One problem with discussing ethics as a beat is that many stories can include an aspect of ethics or ethical issues; indeed, some might argue that all stories ultimately have an ethical or moral debate to either the story itself or the process that brought the news to print. In this paper, ethics is viewed as the process or system of values or loyalties that a person uses to decide what course of action to take. Ethics is essentially the moral, reasoning process used to justify actions.[8] Stories about ethics would focus on decisions made in a situation and the process used to make that decision. The stories could also be about the arguments used in a decision-making process.

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[8] Clifford Christians, Kim B. Rotzoll, and Mark Fackler, *Media Ethics: Cases and Moral Reasoning*, 3rd ed. (New York: Longman Publishing Group, 1991).

This paper's anecdoctal evidence focuses primarily on coverage of ethics that is labeled as such, either in a column title, section heading, or in a byline The reasoning here is that if stories are labeled as, say, being written by an "ethics" reporter or appearing on the "Religion and Ethics" section, it likely indicates a more consistent, prominent reporting of the topic than if it is a more casual inclusion, such as a paragraph here and there. Thus, this paper excludes the writings of ombudsmen, who often write about media ethical issues in response to readers' complaints, but who do not consistently cover ethics alone as a "beat."

One of the longest-running columns with an ethical content is the "Ethics and Religion" column by self-syndicated writer Michael J. McManus. The column has been popular on mostly small and mid-sized newspapers as religion page material. McManus says he included the aspect of ethics in the column's title to help it to appeal to a broader segment of readers.

"My interest in ethics is in part to make the column accessible to the non-believer. My theory is that more people think of themselves as ethical whether or not they are religious," McManus said of the column he has written since 1981. McManus' column is bought by 110 newspapers, including sixteen Gannett-owned papers, with a combined circulation of 920,000, according to McManus.[9]

McManus' column has looked at issues such as that of child-molesting priests or the morality of Bill Clinton. "How does Bill Clinton rate as a moral leader? It depends on who is asked," McManus wrote in a 1992 column. "Clinton has shown courage since he was a teen who stepped between his alcoholic stepfather and his mother ... but his ambition to be president is prompting him to pander for votes."[10]

Although this excerpt does not make it clear, McManus *does* have a specific ethical system that he uses to proclaim actions or views as right or wrong. "I do see in scripture an ethical system that works," McManus said. "So part of what I'm doing is to provide secular evidence of the biblical proposition." In fact, McManus' ethical bias on issues such as pornography and sexuality helped him land a spot as a radio editorialist on a program called "Family News and the Family," run by evangelical Christian psychology guru, James Dobson.

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[9] Michael J. McManus, "Packet to Prospective Subscribers," dated Spring 1992, mailed to the author.
[10] Michael J. McManus, "Despite Press, a Moral Leader," March 28, 1992, column printed in *The Allentown (Pa.) Morning Call.*

Although McManus' column was likely the first one incorporating ethical discussions, it is not the only one. Bruce Hilton, a retired United Methodist minister, writes a weekly column on bioethics. Hilton said he began his column in 1987 at the urging of a close friend, who was an editor at the *San Francisco Examiner*.[11]

"I was a little surprised that he would think that it would have that kind of interest, but the response was good all along," Hilton said. Scripps-Howard News Service picked the column up from the *Examiner*, moving it on to client newspapers. Although the *Examiner*, financially strapped, dropped Hilton in May 1991, along with its entire medical page, Scripps-Howard continued to send Hilton to its roughly 380 newspapers across the country.[12]

Hilton writes primarily about medical ethics, but he tries to look at a variety of issues, not just the decisions individuals face. He worked at newspapers before becoming a minister, and in the early 1970s he wrote "The Hastings Report," a publication of the Hastings Center. In 1973, Hilton became director of the National Center for Bioethics, a small think tank devoted to involving all people into discussions of bioethics. His columns have become popular enough for 50 of them to be compiled in a book, *First Do No Harm: Wrestling with the New Medicine's Life and Death Issues*, first published in 1991 and now in its second printing.[13]

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[11] Bruce Hilton, telephone interview from his Sacramento, California, home, May 25, 1992.
[12] Hilton, *op. cit.*
[13] Bruce Hilton, *First Do No Harm: Wrestling with the New Medicine's Life and Death Issues* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1991).

That people are interested in the coverage of ethics also is clear from the invitations Hilton receives to appear on radio talk shows at distant locales across the country, where his column has appeared. And once, he received 1,200 responses to a column that appeared in the *Examiner*, a successful response, according to Hilton.

Hilton comes from a broader perspective than McManus, in terms of the specific ethical approach he embraces. "My point of view, although certainly educated by Christianity, is more likely Judeo-Christian," Hilton said. Other forces also inform the positions he takes.[14]

Some newspapers have gone a step further than running only a column on ethics. A few newspapers have included ethics in the title of their weekly religion section, although it is still rare. Among the best known is the "Inside Religion and Ethics" weekly Saturday section by the *San Jose Mercury News*.

The section was designed and re-titled to include ethics in early 1985, according to Joan Connell, the section's former editor whose byline was "Mercury News Religion and Ethics Editor." She said the section was created in part because the paper had become so profitable that some editors felt there was a need to give something back to the community, in the form of content rarely supported solely by advertising. Connell became editor of the section in May 1986, bringing with her an eclectic background that included comparative religion and Asian studies.[15]

Connell's emphasis included articles on medical ethics, business ethics, abortion and other topics. For example, in a February 6, 1989 issue, Connell presented reader responses to three hypothetical stories of pregnancies in which readers were asked what they would do if these women sought them out for advice. In her introduction, Connell explained, "We've published a sample of them (reader letters) here, in hope of adding more lucid voices to the continuing public debate on the pros and cons of abortion."[16]

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[14] Hilton, interview, *op. cit.*

[15] Joan Connell, telephone interview from her Washington, D.C., office, April 29, 1992.

This broader focus for the *News'* section was rewarded in 1989 with a first place award from the Religion Newswriters Association, a professional organization comprised of about 200 religion reporters from U.S. daily newspapers.[17]

As the *News'* religion section suggests, the religion beat in some places is subtly changing to incorporate ethics, Connell said. As further evidence, she cited her current position as the first national correspondent for religion, ethics and morality for the Newhouse Newspaper chain, a job she began in August 1991.

So, for example, last year when Connell covered the United Nations-sponsored environmental summit in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, she reported not the environmental pacts signed at the meeting but rather the ethics of the environmental policies promoted.[18]

Another paper to shift the direction of its religion coverage toward broader issues, including ethics, is the *Detroit News*. There, in January 1992, religion reporter Kate DeSmet began writing a weekly "Faith and Philosophy" column. Now, DeSmet said the column forces her to delve into subjects in which she has never ventured before in her ten years as the paper's religion reporter.[19] The column was part of a revamping of the religion page overall and resulted in a transformation of a full page of metro news into a religion page that included specific stories unique to each zoned edition of the paper. The changes have brought more response from readers than anything else DeSmet said she has ever done.

The New York Times has incorporated ethics in an intentional way, too, according to religion reporter Peter Steinfels. Steinfels said a couple of years ago he proposed writing a weekly column to run on Saturdays, in an attempt to appeal to those readers who were well-versed in the religious issues of the day. The "Beliefs" column began in 1990 and allows the *Times* to address ethics and broader topics. But Steinfels said occasionally editors question whether his topics belong in the column, reflecting perhaps a narrow, more traditional view of religion coverage. "I sometimes push it to the edge," Steinfels admitted. Steinfels said that while he believes change is not new for the religion beat, the inclusion of ethics is clearly a recent expansion of the beat.[20]

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[16] Joan Connell, "Doctor, Should I Have an Abortion?" *San Jose Mercury News*, February 4, 1989.
[17] Connell's 1989 winning entries included an article on "The Ethical Tourist." See John Dart's "From the President" column, *Religion Newswriters Association Newsletter*, July/August, 1990, p.1.
[18] Connell, interview, *op. cit.*
[19] Kate DeSmet, "Is the Religion Beat Changing or Just Its Name?" panel discussion, Religion Newswriters Association Awards Banquet, Louisville, Kentucky, May 9, 1992.

Even the byline "Ethics Reporter" has been spied. On March 22, 1992, *The Columbus* (Ohio) *Dispatch* religion reporter at the time, Darris Blackford, attached the byline "Dispatch Ethics Reporter" to his coverage of an international conference on business ethics held in Columbus.[21]

Copy desk editors chose not to change it back to the standard "Dispatch Religion Reporter" or "Dispatch Staff Reporter" bylines Blackford's stories usually carried. Although the byline appeared for a total of thirteen stories about the ethics conference, it did not appear again after the last of those stories ran on April 25, 1992. And although the newspaper's religion section was renamed "Religion and Ethics" in September 1990, in an effort to help the section appeal to a broader group of readers and advertisers, the section rarely carries stories on ethics.[22]

Newspapers are not the only media to include some, albeit sparse, coverage of ethics. *Time* magazine introduced a new section entitled "Ethics" in January 1987. Then-publisher

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[20] Peter Steinfels, "Is the Religion Beat Changing or Just Its Name?" panel discussion, Religion Newswriters Association Awards Banquet, Louisville, Kentucky, May 9, 1992. But not all papers are amenable to joining ethics and religion. Long-time *Los Angeles Times* religion reporter John Dart said a high-level editor at that paper rejected the addition of ethics to the religion heading. "He didn't explain, but I suspect that he and other editors might not look forward to denying repeatedly to readers that the *Times* believe that morality and ethics cannot be reasonably treated without reference to religious values." See Dart, *op. cit.*

[21] Darris Blackford, "Writing Rubber Checks Viewed as Breakdown of Lawmakers' Ethics, Experts Say," *The Columbus Dispatch*, March 22, 1992.

[22] Ruth Hanley, personal interview, April 19, 1992. Hanley is the assistant city editor at *The Columbus Dispatch* and helps oversee the religion and ethics page. Blackford left the religion and ethics beat in November 1992.

Richard B. Thomas, in the magazine's weekly "A Letter From the Publisher," wrote that *Time* editors had observed an increasing number of stories that involved "a conflict between modern scientific and social trends on the one hand and traditional values on the other." The new "Ethics" section was launched with a story about a custody battle between a surrogate mother of New Jersey's Baby M, and the child's biological father and his wife.[23]

Thomas wrote that the subjects appropriate for inclusion in the section were, among others, "test-tube conception to right-to-die legislation, insider trading to South African sanctions. In many cases, despite detailed coverage and full public discussions of opposing views, urgent moral and philosophical questions linger and continue to trouble the American conscience."[24] Later that year, other "Ethics" section stories included a February 2, 1987, report on passing out experimental drugs to people with AIDS and a February 23, 1987, story about withholding nourishment from comatose patients.[25] *Time* also recounted noteworthy events of 1990 that concerned questionable ethics, in a special section that ran December 31, 1990.[26]

Despite *Times'* commitment to an ethics section, "Ethics" became the first "beat" in recent decades to be started without any specific staff assigned to it. Associate Editor Richard N. Ostling said ironically none of the "beats" at the magazine now has assigned staff, including the religion beat, which was his domain for years. Rather, reporters all share in the responsibility to write for all the sections. Ethics, however, has been an irregular feature, and Ostling said there is no consistent definition of the stories that should appear there. At times, for example, one story might be discussed as potentially falling under either the Ethics, Political, Society or Press headings.[27]

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[23] Richard B. Thomas, "A Letter from the Publisher," *Time*, January 19, 1987.
[24] Thomas, *op. cit.*,
[25] "Fateful Decisions on Treating AIDS," *Time*, February 2, 1987, p. 62, and "Is is Wrong to Cut Off Feeding," *Time*, February 23, 1987, p.71.
[26] "Most of Ethics," *Time*, December 31, 1990, p. 62.
[27] Richard N. Ostling, personal interview, Louisville, Kentucky, May 9, 1992.

The *Time* "Ethics" section does sometimes include stories about the press, although the magazine also has a section for the media. Among the press-related "Ethics" stories was a December 30, 1991, story about Patricia Bowman's decision to go public with her identity after the trial in which she accused William Kennedy Smith of rape. The article looked at the conflict of the right to privacy versus the public's right to know.[28]

Even with these few examples of increased coverage of ethics as a "beat," such coverage is still clearly a rarity, especially when it comes to the media covering their own ethical blunders. This is seen in a perusal of stories in Newsbank, a service that "clips" stories from 450 U.S. and Canadian newspapers in all 50 states and categorizes them by topic.[29]

Between January 1981 and December 1985, Newsbank found no articles categorized as being about ethics in the media or on ethics in general. However, the "clipping" service listed 1,712 articles about ethics in government. Many of these stories focused on bribery, conflict of interest, conspiracy and other, primarily financial, misdeeds by officials – both federal and state.[30] In addition to the ethics in government category, the five-year period included twenty-six articles on medical ethics.

The six-year period between January 1986 and January 1992 included a broader selection of ethics-oriented articles and a higher number of average articles per year, compared to the previous period.[31] The more recent period included two articles on ethicists;

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[28] Richard Zoglin, "Was She Right To Go Public?" *Time*, December 30, 1991, p. 61. Of course, although *Time* is the only one of the three major newsmagazines with an "Ethics" section, ethics stories do appear in the other news magazines as well. See, for example, the cover story in Newsweek, "Sex and Psychotherapy: Doctors Sleeping With Patients – A Growing Crisis of Ethical Abuse," April 13, 1992.

[29] Newsbank stories are gleaned from more than 450 newspapers and indexed according to 17 broad categories, such as international affairs and social relations. Searches for subcategories are then possible. The articles are indexed both on a CD-ROM and in print. It should be noted that Newsbank does not include some major prestige newspapers, including *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post*.

[30] This analysis did not read all 1,712 articles, but did rely mostly on headline-type descriptions of the stories. The articles reviewed were not randomly sampled, but were perused systematically, with each subcategory within the broader category of ethics looked at for content.

[31] Again, this study is not using a scientific, randomly selected sample. Although this second time period is one year longer than the earlier one, it seems likely that the increased number of ethical articles was not due merely to the extra year included here. For example, the total ethics articles in Newsbank in the first five years

thirty-four on general ethics; 2,669 on ethics in government; 261 on medical ethics; and four on a television series about ethics. As in the 1981 to 1985 period, none of the articles looked specifically at ethics in the media. Again, the large number of stories under the "ethics in government" category was comprised primarily of articles about fiscal misdeeds by politicians. Medical ethics, the second largest category, looked at both specific timely incidents, such as a specific custody battle over surrogate motherhood, or broad topics, such as physician-assisted suicide.

Because the two time periods were of different lengths, the average number of stories per year was computed. The average number of stories per year that Newsbank categorized as about some type of ethics was 496 between 1986 through 1991, compared to 347 per year between 1981 and 1985 – a 43 percent increase.

Several elite newspapers showed a similar increase in the number of ethics stories carried in the late 1980s and early 1990s. As the table below shows, of eight newspapers indexed by Newspaper Abstracts, six had increases in the number of ethics articles, one as high as 231.3 percent, over the number of ethics articles indexed in 1987 and 1988. For the two newspapers that had a decrease in the number of ethics articles – *The New York Times* and the *Christian Science Monitor* – the percent decrease was substantially less than the drop in the total number of articles indexed for those papers in the two time periods.[32] Although the total number of ethics articles in the two time periods increased 44.5 percent, the number of total articles indexed for all eight papers declined between 1987-88 and 1991-92 by 13.9

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studied were 1,738, compared to a total of 2,974 between 1986 through the end of 1991, an increase of 71.1 percent, much larger than would be expected by the addition of a single extra year of stories.

[32] Newspaper Abstracts electronically "clips" and categorizes most of the editorial content from nine elite newspapers. Although Newspaper Abstracts is available on CD-ROM going back to 1985, not all of the newspapers were included in the abstract service at that date. *The Washington Post*, for example, was not added in full until 1989 and *The New York Times* was added in 1987. In this analysis, 1987-88 were the earliest years for which eight major papers were available, and 1991-92 the most recent years. The intervening two years, although not reported here, confirmed the trend of increased ethics coverage. This paper used the CD-ROM version of Newspaper Abstracts, which required the use of two-year intervals prior to 1990. The printed version of Newspaper Abstracts, although segregated by individual year, allows for a numerical comparison of topics only by physically counting the entries. Such a tedious task is not necessary on the computerized version.

percent. Newspapers in recent years have suffered from a decline in advertising dollars, which likely reflects this drop in the number of indexed articles, since Newspaper Abstracts indexes all editorial content.

Although this review of coverage of ethics has not rigorously, systematically quantified data about the subject, it offers some initial evidence that coverage of ethics in the print media, including coverage of ethics as a beat, is becoming more prevalent.

Changes in Ethics Articles*

	91-92 ethics	87-88 ethics	% change ethics	91-92 all topics	87-88 all topics	% change all topics
Atlanta Const.	838	572	46.5+	64,532	87,348	26.1-
Boston Globe	825	359	129.8+	76,330	69,657	9.6+
Chicago Trib.	529	455	16.3+	76,864	88,009	12.7-
Christ. Sci. Mon.	128	147	12.9-	15,496	25,579	39.4-
L.A. Times	639	403	58.5+	73,702	76,387	3.5-
N.Y Times	927	971	4.5-	86,864	113,238	23.3-
USA Today	424	128	231.3+	47,196	42,349	11.4+
Wall St. Journal	402	226	77.9+	147,355	167,782	12.2-
TOTAL	4,712	3,261	44.5+	588,321	670349	13.9-

Percent change was computed because ethics was such a small percent of the total articles as to make any comparison of straight percentages difficult. Also, the years 1987-88 and 1991-92 were compared because they were the earliest and most recent, respectively, that Newspaper Abstracts included all of these papers in its database. The intervening two years (1989-90) merely confirmed the trend shown with these figures. All percents were rounded to the nearest one-tenth of a percent.

*"Ethics" included stories about medical, government, and business ethics. Subcategories were not distinguished.

However, despite some growth in the coverage of ethics in general, particularly in politics and medicine, it seems clear the media still do little to report their own ethical deliberations or the reasoning used to print or not to print a story.

Yet this failure to report on ethics in journalism does not appear to reflect a lack of interest by editors about the topic.

That editors take ethical concerns seriously seems evident in a 1986 report by the Ethics Committee of the American Society of Newspaper Editors.[33] The committee found that at least 78 journalists were dismissed or suspended for ethics violations in the past three years, even if many of the editors in this survey did not agree on what is or is not "ethical," given certain situations. But the survey also found that while some editors do police the newsroom for ethical violations, few report them to the public. The unscientific sampling of newspaper editors reported that 87 percent did not publish a story about an incident leading to the dismissal or suspension of an employee.

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[33] Morin, *op. cit.*

> As one editor noted, many of the violations – such as a reporter who accepted a slightly reduced rate on a hotel room – are of marginal reader interest at best. However, W. Davis (Buzz) Merritt Jr., executive editor of the Wichita Eagle-Beacon, said a story should be published about dismissals 'if the violation involved something that appeared in the newspaper.'[34]

Plenty of other evidence exists to show that journalists are concerned with ethics, in fact increasingly so. The major trade magazines for newspaper journalists – *Columbia Journalism Review,* the former *Washington Journalism Review*, and *Editor and Publisher* – all run frequent discussions of how particular stories were handled, including ethical quandaries that arise. And ethics is a major concern for the Society of Professional Journalists. The group has published an annual ethics report since 1983.[35] The group's code of ethics is among the best known in the business and is reproduced in some basic news writing texts.[36]

A flurry of textbooks with salient examples of ethical problems has come on the market in the past ten years to systematize the concern with ethics.[37] The books are fodder for the many journalism schools that require ethics courses of all journalism majors. [38]

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[34] Morin, *op. cit.*

[35] See Samuel P. Winch, *Journalism on Ethics: An Annotated Bibliography of Mass Communication Ethics, 1970-1989*. Unpublished masters thesis, Ohio University, 1991.

[36] For one example, see Ralph Izard, Hugh Culbertson, and Don Lambert, *The Fundamentals of News Reporting*, 5th ed. (Dubuque, Iowa: Kendall/Hunt Publishing Co., 1990).

[37] For just two of many possible examples, see *Ethics in Journalism* by Jeffrey Olen, (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice Hall, 1988), and *The Virtuous Journalist*, by Stephen Kladman and Tom L. Beauchamp, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987). Douglas A. Anderson and Frederic A. Leigh also discuss the increased interest in ethics, pointing out that concern about ethics among journalists is at an all-time high. See Anderson and Leigh, "How Newspaper Editors and Broadcast news Directors View Media Ethics," *Newspaper*

Academic journal articles show the increased interest in ethics as well. In 1986, the quarterly *Journal of Mass Media Ethics* began. *Media Ethics Update* is published by Emerson College twice a year, beginning in Spring 1988.[39] Many of these journals' articles focus on how ethics should be taught or what process journalists should use to make ethics-related decisions in their jobs.

Even *Journalism Quarterly* has increased the few number of research articles on ethics, according to its former editor, Dr. Guido H. Stempel III.[40] Between 1973 and 1983, *Journalism Quarterly* ran three articles on ethics, total. Now, the publication averages about four an issue, Stempel said.[41]

If ethics is a key concern of the profession of journalism, (indeed, some academicians argue that a code of ethics is a vital component of deciding what is a "profession"), why does the topic only infrequently and inconsistently appear in print?[42]

Journalist and pastor Bruce Hilton believes the media's failure to report on ethics of any kind in part stems from an erroneous perception that ethics is the stuff of professors and preachers, best suited for weighty debates rather than news ink.

So far, this paper has tried to show there is some evidence that coverage of ethics is growing in a few places, but that there is also still resistance to it. Now the discussion will

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Research Journal 13 (Winter/Spring 1992):112. Anderson and Leigh also have a more complete listing of recent textbooks in media ethics.

[38] Clifford Christians found that in 1984, media ethics courses were taught in 117 colleges and universities. See Christians, "Media Ethics Courses Have Increased Since 1977," *Journalism Educator*, 40 (Summer 1985):17.

[39] Winch, *op. cit.*

[40] Guido H. Stempel III, personal interview at Ohio University, Athens, Ohio. April 30, 1992.

[41] Admittedly, this is not the first time ethics has been an important concern for journalists. Ethics first became popular in the 1920s, but Douglas Anderson has noted that the topic was on the back burner in the 1940s, 1950s, 1960s and early 1970s, and this lack of interest was reflected in the few academic studies written on the subject during that time. See Dennis Anderson, "How Managing Editors View and Deal with Ethical Issues," *Journalism Quarterly* 64 (Summer/Autumn 1987): 341-345. The most recent increased interest in ethics dates to the Watergate era, according to John C. Merrill and Ralph D. Barney. See Merrill and Barney, eds., *Ethics and the Press* (New York: Hastings House, 1985).

[42] Studies on professionalization are abundant, with the 1964 *Journalism Quarterly* article "Professionalization Among Newsmen," by Jack M. McLeod and Searles E. Hawley Jr., as among the seminal works. The authors establish eight criteria for a profession, with a code of ethics as one of them. See *Journalism Quarterly* 41 (Autumn 1964): 529-538.

focus on interpretations of both the role of ethics itself and the "ideology" of journalism, to argue that together, they require the coverage of ethics in all fields.

This paper argues that ethics not only belongs on the news pages, but that society is harmed when the topic is given only slight treatment. This argument extends not only to coverage by the news media of its own ethical quandaries, but of those of other disciplines as well. These arguments are not new or unique, but they are arguments generally used to support increased ethical sensitivity by the media, rather than coverage of ethics on their news pages as a beat. Thus, rather than proposing new arguments, this paper draws together existing literature for a new purpose.

Covering Ethics: The Ethical Thing to Do

Ethical debates provide a process for helping people to make decisions that are in accordance with certain moral, religious or philosophical principles about what is right. To aid the process, some ethicists have proposed specific processes, such as the Potter Box, to follow in debating dilemmas. The values or principles sometimes used vary from Mill's Utilitarianism to the "love your neighbor as yourself" urging of Judeo-Christian heritage. Regardless of whether it is Immanuel Kant, Aristotle, Mill or Christ, it is possible to use each of these systems to justify the inclusion of ethics in the news.[43]

Take for example, Mill's Utilitarian scheme. Here, Mill argues that what is right is that which results in the greatest good for the greatest number of people. The inclusion of ethics could be seen as helping the most people because it helps them deal with their own ethical dilemmas. At least by including ethics, the readers who do not care to trouble their minds with it can avoid it. But the omission of ethics does not give an option to those who do want to read or hear more about it.

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[43] Obviously this analysis does not mention all the principles or systems of ethical reasoning. For a brief discussion, see Christians, et. al., *op. cit.*

Aristotle's "Golden Mean" would suggest that a compromise between no ethics and all ethics would be the "right" course for newspapers. Indeed, this article is not arguing that all content needs to include an ethical element, but that it have some presence. Publishers who adopt Kant's "Categorical Imperative" as their system of deciding which behavior is ethical, might argue that ethics should be included in all newspapers and that fact requires them to publish more about ethics. The Judeo-Christian viewpoint might argue that the loving thing to do is to provide access to forums of ethical debate to help individuals struggle with the questions in their own lives. Again, the specific system is not as important as the process it promotes, and in every case, it is possible to justify the inclusion of ethics in media coverage as the ethical, morally proper thing to do and as a necessity for a properly functioning society.

While this paper argues for increased coverage of these ethical debates, it is not a call for the media to become a moral police. Rather, the media should record and acknowledge the ethical debates without adopting one specific ethical perspective on their straight news pages. Naturally, they are free to adopt a perspective in their editorial columns.

Covering Ethics: The Professional Thing to Do

Certainly a discussion about covering ethics should include an argument as to its ethical validity. But another compelling reason ethics should be included in the news is that the "ideology of journalism" requires it.[44] Part of this "ideology" hinges on three aspects discussed here: news values, the concept of social responsibility, and the notions of news objectivity and thoroughness.[45]

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[44] I recognize that some people will not agree with the use of the word ideology here. However, its use, not pioneered here, is intended to describe with one word the wide variety of assumptions, values and norms that guide U.S. print journalists.

[45] Michael Schudson is among the scholars discussing this "ideology." In *Discovering the News*, he talks about the notion of objectivity becoming ideology after World War I. See *Discovering the News: A Social History of American Newspapers* (New York: Basic Books, Inc.: 1978), p.121.

Journalists, researchers, and media critics alike acknowledge that media institutions play a key role in what is placed before the public under the guise of "news." While few agree on the specific power of the media in determining the news, it is clear they do play a role in news selection. What is less clear is how the media decide what is news.

In trying to get a handle on this fuzzy notion of news value, Carl Hausman writes that the first step in deciding what is news "is to assess whether it has any immediate effect on readers, viewers, or listeners – whether, for example, it tugs at their heartstrings, their pocketbooks, or, in the case of actions of civil unrest or war, their desires for safety and stability."[46] Reporters and editors often rely on several guidelines for assessing news values, among them one that says the more people affected by an event or issue, the greater news value it holds.

Just by using this single news value that assesses how many people are affected by a potential story, one could argue that ethics affects everyone's life at some level, whether it is the professional ethics of physicians, or the personal ethics of, say, a woman's decision to have an abortion. At the same time that ethics affect many people, more individuals have become more ethically sensitive, former reporter Susan Garment writes in her 1991 book, *Scandal.*[47]

"We don't tolerate what we used to," Garment says of political malfeasance. Not only have people's tolerances declined, but the whole political power structure has begun to erode, giving greater weight to ethics and morals – further support for a need to increase coverage of ethics. Garment writes:

> Since Kennedy's time, traditional political parties and economic interest groups have declined in power. The press and the courts have, correspondingly, grown in importance. So have new kinds of ideologically based interest groups, along with the political

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[46] Carl Hausman, *The Decision-Making Process in Journalism* (Chicago: Nelson-Hall Publishers, 1990), p. 11.

[47] Suzanne Garment, *Scandal: The Crisis of Mistrust in American Politics.*(New York: Times Books, 1991), p.6.

> professionals who run them. Compromise and private agreement have declined as political strategies, while the use of publicity, litigation, and appeals to moral principle have risen.[48]

One does not have to look far for evidence that Garment is on track; in last year's presidential election, family values was a significant campaign issue.[49]

Another part of the ideology of journalism is the view that the media should reflect or mirror the world around them. Today's newspapers still seek to do what the *The Boston Herald* told its readers its goals were in 1847: to "give expression to the spirit of the age" and to give a "faithful and unflattering likeness of the world."[50]

An unflattering part of existence in the 1990s and beyond includes people whose timid pulse of life comes from a machine – a reality that demands and deserves public and private debate about the ethics of when to end a life. That existence includes questions perceived, perhaps inaccurately, as less profound, such as deciding whether a laundry detergent is environmentally safe. And life today includes realities about the media, such as determining when a photograph is too graphic to print. To accurately reflect today's varied and complex world, the media are mandated to cover the ethical implications of the media's decisions, as well as the decisions of others.

Another aspect of the "ideology of news" often discussed is that of social responsibility, that is, the requirement that the media serve the public's needs and uphold the general well-being of humanity by informing people with truthful, balanced coverage so they can make better decisions in a democratic-based nation.[51]

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[48] Garment, *op. cit., p.7.*

[49] For just one example of the many stories on family values that ran during the campaign, see Associated Press reporter Leslie Dreyfous' article, "In a World of Change, Just What are These Family Values Anyway?" printed in *The Columbus Dispatch*, November 1, 1992.

[50] Schudson, *op. cit.*, pp.193-94.

[51] Probably the best known discussions of the social responsibility function of the press come in the report by the Commission on Freedom of the Press, *A Free and Responsible Press* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1947), William E. Hocking, *Freedom of The Press: A Framework of Principle* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1947), and Fred S. Siebert, Theodore Peterson, and Wilbur Schramm, *Four Theories of the Press* (Urbana, Ill.: University of Illinois Press, 1956).

This social responsibility stems in part because, as ethics scholar Louis W. Hodges has pointed out, the media do more than just "report" the world's events.

> The truth is that news is what we tell the people, not what we 'gather.' We journalists, and we alone, are ultimately responsible for what we decide to tell them.
>
> Awareness that we create news, that we do not merely gather it, reminds us that we are professionals engaged in a critically important public service: We serve people by telling them what they need to know as well as what they want to know.[52]

Part of what people need to know today, it seems, is the means to arrive at every day decisions that have become increasingly complex and obscured by the variety of choices in a pluralistic, mobile society. "I would argue that the most important questions we have to face, the decisions we have to make are ethical decisions, and those are the ones that we are the least prepared for. We tend to go at them from a gut reaction, or tend to do it from a majority position," Hilton said.[53] A socially responsible media, it seems, must include coverage of ethics to better prepare people for the decisions they face.

The ideology of journalism also includes a notion of objectivity and thoroughness. To define thoroughness, journalists have devised six simple questions that a news report must answer to be considered "thorough": who, what, when, where, why, and how.

But media scholar James Carey suggests the "how" of a story is often left unexplored, the victim of deadline pressures, too much reliance on telephone interviews, and a desire for frugality with words. Sometimes the quality about a story that makes it news – such as a bizarre, unusual event – is in part news because it defies explanation. Although an intolerant public means politics and economics are more likely to include an explanation of the "why" or "how," the explanations are often simplistic and more likely a motive, rather than a true cause. According to Carey:

> It takes time, effort and substantial knowledge to find a cause, whereas motives are available for a phone call. And motives are

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[52] Louis W. Hodges, "We Just Gather the News? That's Nonsense!" *Presstime*, May 1992, p. 34.
[53] Hilton, *op. cit.*

> profoundly misleading and simplifying. Motive explanations end up portraying a world in which people are driven by desires no more complicated than greed.[54]

By failing to go beyond the issue of motives, to causes, and beyond that to consequences and finally significance, journalists "weaken the explanatory power of their work."[55]

The inclusion of ethics, it seems, might sometimes be the missing element in explaining some events. For example, many stories about last year's riots in Los Angeles blamed the verdict in the Rodney King trial as the motivation for people destroying and looting dozens of urban businesses. A few journalists went further to look at the riots as representing the release of pent-up frustration from decades of economic and political injustice toward African-Americans. But these stories also tended to lay the blame on politicians, and to suggest new urban programs and spending solutions. Rare, if at all, were stories looking at the ethics of a society segregated by race, economics, and justice. Where were the stories seeking deeper answers to why, with all the marvels humanity has invented and scourges it has cured, violent revolt is still the only way some people can be heard? News stories that search for the underlying ethic of an act or event, it seems, will more nearly find the missing "how" and "why" that Carey laments.[56]

Ethical queries are certainly the basis for understanding many of the "hows" and "whys" of stories printed or aired as news. Thus, as reporters are putting the spotlight on other professions' ethics, they must turn the publicity toward themselves, as well. As Bill Seymour writes in *The Quill*, "There should be routine reporting about controversial news decisions, as well as about reporters' or editors' gripes about the processes leading to a story's publication or broadcast."[57]

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[54] James Carey, "The Dark Continent of American Journalism," in Karl Robert Manoff and Michael Shudson, *Reading the News: A Pantheon Guide to Popular Culture* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1986), p. 181.
[55] Carey, *op. cit.*, p. 195.
[56] Carey, *op. cit.*
[57] Bill Seymour, "Tear Down the Journalism Clubhouse," *The Quill* 75(October 1987), p. 18.

Overt coverage of ethical issues journalists face might help their notorious credibility problem with the public, by showing that journalists do not just spew everything they know onto the page and that they do analyze a story's impact on the people involved. Coverage of ethics might also help encourage higher ethical standards for the press, especially if reporters and editors know they might be expected to justify an action in a public forum.

The question no one can answer is whether the small signs of growth in coverage of ethics will continue. The men and women who are now becoming editors were among the first in recent decades to attend courses on ethics. In addition, the ability to report anywhere at anytime, with high-tech gadgets and gizmos, means that more and more, the ethical decisions are being made on the street, on the air. Whether these facts will translate into more reporting about ethics, however, can only be ascertained from hindsight.

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